THEORIES OF RHETORIC IN THE 18TH-CENTURY SCOTTISH SERMON

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

The aim of this thesis is to examine the development of the sermon in Scotland during the 18th century, and to attempt to isolate the theories of rhetorical thought that influenced the design and content of the sermon during this period. Particular attention will be paid to examining the development of the sermon in the light of contemporary interest in the study of rhetoric and belles lettres, and an attempt will be made to relate trends in sermon rhetoric to movements in Scottish literary taste during the period.

CHAPTER 1

Chapter 1 contains the introduction, examines the historical background to the sermon, and to the 18th-century Scottish sermon, in particular, investigates contemporary attitudes to the sermon in periodicals, and deals with the forms in which the sermon was presented to the public.

CHAPTER 2

Chapter 2 deals with 18th-century resources for training in rhetoric. As a preliminary step, it examines the attitude of the Church to training in rhetoric, and then deals with the teaching of rhetoric at 18th-century Scottish universities.

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Appendix 3 contains a check-list of sermons printed in Scotland 1700 to 1800.

KEY

DNB	Dictionary of National Biography
EPL	Edinburgh Public Library
EUL	Edinburgh University Library
FES	Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticanae
NC	New College Library, University of Edinburgh
NLS	National Library of Scotland
SRO	Scottish Record Office
TLS	Times Literary Supplement

NOTES

Supplied text and editorial interpolations are indicated by the use of square brackets.

In transcribing manuscript sources, the spelling and the punctuation of the original holograph have been adhered to, with minor adjustments of punctuation where necessary to assist the sense.

The Bibliograpny contains entries for the majority of works cited in the text, but some element of selection has been necessary in order to keep the bibliography within reasonable proportions.

CHAPTER 1

THE 18TH-CENTURY SCOTTISH SERMON

THE 18TH-CENTURY SCOTTISH SERMON

INTRODUCTION

> Why, Sir, you are to consider, that sermons make a considerable branch of English literature; so that a library must be very imperfect if it has not a numerous collection of sermons.[1]

Dr Johnson's reply to Wilkes's amazement at the presence of an extensive collection of sermons in the library of the late Topham Beauclerk puts into perspective one view of the anomalous position of the sermon in 18th-century life. Johnson's remark highlights the growing regard in the 18th century for the sermon as a literary artifact; and the movement towards measuring a sermon's success not solely by doctrinal content but also in terms of literary craftsmanship. How marked this trend had become by the 1770s can be appreciated by a glance at the commendation of the progress of the sermon contained in this letter published in the Weekly Magazine in 1778:

> Abstracted from spiritual and religious motives, sermons may now be perused as productions in which the finest taste is displayed.[2]

There was, however, another view of the position of the sermon in polite literature. The comment in the review of Gregory Sharpe's Sermons on Various Subjects (1772) in the Critical Review presents the other side of the picture:

> The title of Sermons is no great recommendation of a book. We have seen many bulky volumes, under this denomination, consisting of pious,

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1 Boswell's Life of Johnson ed. G.B. Hill, 1934-50, iv, 105.

2 Weekly Magazine, xl(1778), 192. The letter was signed 'D---'.

> but trite instructions, pages of grave and formal trifling, inferences of no importance, and a tedious train of arguments, calculated to prove - what no person of common sense would dispute. Such discourses can be of no service to men of letters: they are only fit for those illiterate old women, who can sit nodding over a godly book, without either knowledge, taste or reflection.[1]

To a large extent, the 18th century was a literary 'spawning ground' for sermons. In addition to the religious sermon or discourse delivered from the pulpit, the title of sermon lent itself to the 18th-century vogue for popular 'sermons' or discourses on moral topics. There were Sermons to Young Women[2], Sermons on Education[3], Sermons on the Most Prevalent Vices[4], and Sermons on Social Life[5], all devised to this pattern. So much was this the case that when James Murray chose to justify addressing his sermons to 'asses',, he did so on the grounds that:

> When a person is disposed to preach a sermon or two for the edification of any of God's creatures, he is under great difficulties to find a proper subject to discourse upon .... There are now sermons to young men, and sermons to young women, lectures on heads and lectures on hearts. Almost every subject is exhausted and sermonized to death.[6]

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1 Critical Review, xxxiii(1772),447. It should be noted that Sharpe's Sermons were excepted from this charge.

2 Sermons to Young Women, London, 1766.

3 E.W. Whitaker, Sermons on Education, London, 1788.

4 David Lamont, Sermons on the Most Prevalent Vices, London, 1780.

5 William Wood, Sermons on Social Life, London, 1775. The success which the title of 'Sermons' ensured on the 18th-century literary market has been contrasted with the later 19th-century fashion for giving sermons novel-like titles to improve their sale on the literary market.

6 James Murray, Sermons to Asses, Paisley, 1800 (6th ed.), preface v-vi. Murray (1732-1782) was born in Berwickshire and studied under Dr William Hamilton at Edinburgh.

Despite gloomy prognostications on the future of the sermon and assertions from time to time throughout the century that the sermon had no interest for men of letters, the history of the 18th-century Scottish pulpit does indicate a growth of respect for the sermon as a literary form, particularly among members of the Scots literati; and, more importantly, it reveals a deliberate policy on the part of the best sermon-writers to compose their sermons not primarily as doctrinal exercises but as literary artifacts.

As the 18th century progressed, one can detect an increasing admiration for elegance in sermon-writing; and a matching suspicion of what contemporaries rather loosely termed 'the vulgar'. Scottish sermon-writers were frequently reminded about rising standards in pulpit rhetoric in no uncertain manner by the English reviewers of their sermons. In 1790 the Monthly Review strongly attacked John Dun's sermons in these terms:

> The very familiar, not to say vulgar, talk of this orthodox son of the Scottish Kirk, will not, probably, find many admirers on this side of the Tweed. Notwithstanding all the pains which the author has taken to give, as he says, 'old, but precious and golden wares a new brush', we cannot promise him a very ready sale for his goods in the English market.[1]

As new ideas on social order and improvement began to emerge, they brought about a new awareness of the sermon and what its rôle should be in civilized society. These ideas were expressed in seminal documents of social order,

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1 Monthly Review, v(1791),233. They were printed in Kilmarnock and sold in London by Charles Dilly. John Dun was chaplain to the Auchinleck family and tutor to James Boswell. His Sermons were published in 1790 in two volumes.

including Adam Ferguson's Essay on the History of the Civil Society (1767) and Adam Smith's The Theory of Moral Sentiments (1759). Greater emphasis was laid on the moral and ethical sentiments expressed in sermons, and on the manner in which these sentiments were delivered; and this tendency led to a consequent lessening of emphasis on the intellectual and theological content of sermons.

The trend towards refining sermon form stemmed partly from a dissatisfaction in the early part of the 18th century with both delivered and written sermon forms, and partly from a preoccupation with the sermon as a literary form in a climate of developing literary consciousness. William Cowper's sorry portrait of the Augustan 'messenger of grace' in the poem 'The Task' offers a strange contrast to the often eulogistic admiration bestowed on later Scottish sermon-writers:

> Behold the picture! Is it like? - Like whom?
> The things that mount the rostrum with a skip,
> And then skip down again; pronounce a text,
> Cry hem! and reading what they never wrote,
> Just fifteen minutes, huddle up their work,
> And with a well-bred whisper close the scene.[1]

If one compares Cowper's words with the statement made by the reviewer of John Erskine's Discourses Preached on Several Occasions (1798), it is clear that opinion on the quality of the contemporary sermon had changed by the end of the 18th century:

> We have had occasion to notice, with pleasure, the literary labours, the excellent sermons, and the distinguished abilities, of many of the Scottish

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1 William Cowper, 'The Task' in Works, London, 1874, i,206.

> clergy. Deserved homage has been paid by the public to the talents of Robertson and Henry, of Blair and Walker, of Macknight, Webster, Macqueen, Wishart, Drysdale, Carr and others; and we are now favoured with a volume of sermons by Dr. Erskine, whose theological dissertations, sketches of church-history, &c., have been well received, and who, we understand, maintains a respectable character and an unsullied reputation, as one of the clergy of the northern establishment.[1]

The aim of this thesis is to examine the development of the sermon in Scotland during the 18th century and to attempt to isolate the theories of rhetorical thought that influenced the design and content of the sermon during this period. Particular attention will be paid to examining the development of the sermon in the light of contemporary 18th-century interest in the study of rhetoric and belles lettres (an interest that led to the establishment of the first Chair of Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres at the University of Edinburgh in 1762). An attempt will also be made to relate trends in sermon rhetoric to movements in Scottish literary taste during the period.

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1 Critical Review, xxvii (1799),79.

THE SERMON: ITS HISTORICAL SETTING AND 18th-CENTURY BACKGROUND

> The Pulpit has plainly several advantages peculiar to itself. The dignity and importance of its subjects must be acknowledged superior to any other. They are such as ought to interest every one, and can be brought home to every man's heart; and such as admit, at the same time, both the highest embellishment in describing, and the greatest vehemence and warmth in enforcing them.[1]

Any attempt at analysis of trends in sermon composition and delivery is governed naturally by the volume and by the nature of the material available to the researcher. In this respect there are two primary sources available to the student of the 18th-century Scottish sermon. There are, firstly, the sermon manuals produced as guides for sermon-writers. The presentation of religious thought to a society advancing at what was considered an alarming speed was recognized as being a difficult and demanding task. John Langhorne, the author of Letters on the Eloquence of the Pulpit, reflected in 1765:

> To chuse fit subjects for pulpit-orations, requires a greater degree of taste, and a more perfect knowledge of human nature than is commonly supposed to be necessary.[2]

In response to this need, a number of treatises or guides to successful pulpit oratory were published in the 18th century with the aim of assisting sermon-writers to tailor their sermons to meet the demands of the age. Secondly, there are the sermons themselves. Eighteenth-century sermon scripts

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1 Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres, London, 1783, ii, 101-102.

2 Critical Review, xix (1765), 368.

provide a valuable source of information; in the first place, for what they reveal about the selection of texts upon which discourses were based and, in the second place, for what they tell us about the methods by which the material was assembled for delivery or for publication. They are also a profitable source of critical material, since they often contain attacks on the rhetorical styles of opposing parties (or indeed individual orators) within the Church. An examination of the critical content of the texts of 18th-century Scottish sermons will often contribute usefully to explaining or confirming the reasons for shifts in the canons of literary taste in the 18th century, and they may also help to illuminate the interplay between the religious and literary movements of the period. The reviewer of Thomas Newman's Sermons on Various Important Subjects (1760) compared the task of the sermon-writer with that of the man of letters:

> Of all the different species of composition, there is not one, perhaps, in which it is so difficult to excel, as in that of writing sermons, or public orations; because it requires such a variety of talents, as are seldom united in the same person. In the historian, we are satisfied with judgment and perspicuity; in the poet, we are contented with nobleness of sentiment and sublimity of expression: but in the orator we expect to find all the precision and accuracy of the former, and all the fire and enthusiasm of the latter.[1]

In addition to these primary sources, the critical works of the period, principally the periodical reviews, provide useful information since they frequently contain allusions to preaching and critical comment on contemporary modes of

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1 Critical Review, ix (1760), 1.

pulpit rhetoric. Yet another valuable source of material for any examination of 18th-century Scottish sermons are the numerous pamphlets that rolled off the presses in response to any innovation in pulpit rhetoric.

The 18th-century Scottish sermon underwent considerable change as a consequence of the influence of aesthetics on the presentation of Presbyterian beliefs. As we shall see later, one wing of the Church of Scotland (which in the early 1750s became popularly known as the 'Moderate' wing of the Church) shifted ground to accommodate in its sermons the tenets of good taste which, in the period after 1750, was regarded as an essential accompaniment to the clergy's secular rôle in society. A consideration of the influence of 18th-century aesthetic thought on the Scottish sermon is therefore essential to an understanding of how the 18th-century sermon in Scotland developed. By contrast, from 1732, when the first defection from the Church of Scotland took place, the 'Evangelical' or 'anti-moderatism' arm of the Church resisted the inclination towards good taste, and grew more and more belligerent in its demands for an 'Evangelical' message focused on theological truth and devoid of meretricious ornament. It can be argued that from 1750 onwards, pulpit rhetoric began to be fashioned to meet the requirements of literary good taste in all quarters of the Church save those of strong Evangelical belief. Evangelical sermons were conspicuously, even ostentatiously, 'unliterary'. Not surprisingly, contempt for the enthusiasm and unrelieved fundamentalism of the

Evangelical sermon grew more bitter among those who subscribed to Moderate opinions and confirmed their desire for a more 'moderate' form of rhetoric. In his Church History of Scotland (1882), John Cunningham referred to John Foster's Essay on the Aversion of Men of Taste to Evangelical Religion and commented of the dislike of men of taste for Evangelical religion:

> It is worthy of remembrance that the serious-minded Foster has ascribed a large part of the dislike which men of taste exhibit to evangelical religion to the unclassical garments in which evangelical religion is too frequently clothed.[1]

The literary 'crudity' associated with enthusiastic forms of religion was itself largely instrumental in creating a desire for a theory of rhetoric which would embody the new concepts of aestheticism and religious candour so highly prized in the period 1750 to 1800.

A complete reversal of opinion regarding the place of the sermon took place within the century. This point is illustrated very succinctly by the case of the sermons of James Gillespie, Principal of St Mary's College, St Andrews. Gillespie's sermons were written in mid-century but they were not published until 1797 after his death when they were edited by George Hill. The sermons attracted scathing comment from the Monthly Review for their 'old fashioned rhetoric' and the reviewer continued his attack in this vein:

> Our pious ancestors sat with delight while the preacher filled up his hour, and patiently saw him turn the hour-glass for a second: they counted the

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1 John Cunningham, The Church History of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1882(2nd ed.),ii,301.

> number of heads into which he divided his discourse, and, after ninthly and tenthly had passed over their ear, waited, without murmuring, for the application. In these days of frozen zeal, a pitiful half-hour is the utmost that either the preacher or the hearer can devote to this fatiguing business; and, in a polite auditory, the sound of first, secondly, and thirdly, would be insufferable.[1]

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE 18TH-CENTURY SCOTTISH SERMON

To present the 18th-century Scottish sermon in an accurate setting, it is first of all essential to understand the sermon in the context of its century and to allow for the gradations in the meaning of the word 'sermon' that occurred from century to century. The Latin sermo meant 'a conversation', as were, for example, the early religious addresses of the Apologists, whose sermons or talks were informal and quite free of the oratorical emphasis later superimposed upon them. The process by which the earliest meaning of the term as an 'informal address' was transformed into what an 18th-century cleric understood by the term is too diffuse a subject for this study, but an attempt must be made to indicate the general lines along which this development took place.

In his history of English pulpit oratory, W. Fraser Mitchell states that pulpit oratory, when it first made a significant appearance in the 4th century, was a product of the combined influences of Judaism and the classical

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1 Monthly Review, xxii (1797), 351-2.

tradition.[1] The religious address came from the Judaic tradition, and in its pristine form, it was restricted to simple exposition and exhortation. Gradually, however, as it was used more and more at ceremonies like marriages and funerals in the synagogues, it became more formal in tone. This formal emphasis was bestowed principally by the use of allegorical exegesis from Old Testament texts. (It is interesting to note that the rhetorical strain of New Testament writing, with its emphasis on direct rhetorical confrontation, was in direct contrast to the earlier movement). Mitchell draws attention to the fact that in the later books of the New Testament, the various rhetorical methods used by the disciples were attempts to evade any kind of reliance on rhetorical devices and, for this reason, they tended to concentrate on giving brief biographical accounts of Christ's life. In Attic Orators, R.C. Jebb suggests that this emphasis is explained by the Jewish dislike of rhetoric.[2] Despite a dislike of rhetorical devices, however, the religious message had to be conveyed through a satisfactory rhetorical vehicle if it was to have persuasive impact.[3]

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1 W. Fraser Mitchell, English Pulpit Oratory, New York, 1962, p.44. For the historical background to the 18th-century Scottish sermon , I have relied heavily on printed sources, notably Mitchell's excellent work on English pulpit oratory.

2 R.C. Jebb, Attic Orators, London, 1886, i,83.

3 The Ciceronian dictum: Verborum delectum, originem esse eloquentiae or 'An accurate choice of words is the foundation of eloquence'.

The second influential element in shaping early pulpit rhetoric was classical oratory. Two primary sources - Ionian dialectic and Sicilian rhetoric - provided the basis for Athenian rhetoric. The former contributed an emphasis on correctness of diction and the latter a stress on beauty in diction. The scheme of division into proem, narrative, argument, subsidiary remarks and peroration (a division which became generally accepted for any formal address) was adopted from Corax of Syracuse's Art of Rhetoric. The later influence of Georgias of Leontini and his pupil Isocrates contributed a third element to rhetorical theory: an interest in the poetical use of language.

When the scope of Christian worship was extended in the 3rd century, the need to apply the rules of rhetoric to the religious message or 'pulpit oratory' became more imperative. The precise date at which rhetoric and oratory were fused is obscure, but it is reasonable to suggest that from the 3rd century onwards, the desire for a more formal style of religious address confirmed the need to apply rhetorical standards to pulpit addresses. J. Oswald Dykes dates this development to the period 185 to 254 A.D.

> The application of rhetoric to the pulpit began early. From the time of Origen (A.D. 185-254) indications multiply that the Greek schools were beginning to influence the preaching of the church.[1]

As more elaborate scriptural exposition became popular, the discourses of the patristic fathers were presented to

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1 J. Oswald Dykes, The Christian Minister and his Duties, Edinburgh, 1908, p.239.

audiences who had become well-versed in the appreciation of rhetoric. This fact in itself may help to explain the persistence of the rhetorical tradition in pulpit oratory. Samuel Dill states in Roman Society in the Last Century of the Western Empire (1905):

> It survived the more easily because of the controversial nature of Christianity at this time and the importance of preaching. The change from the rhetor's cathedra to the pulpit was often one of place and subject: the method was the same. And so the ideal of the orator persisted.[1]

The belief that correct rhetorical presentation strengthened the exposition was further strengthened by systematic instruction in the rules of rhetoric; and, it was influenced, secondly, by an upsurge of interest in declamatory exercises for students. These exercises gave students plenty of scope for experimenting with a full range of rhetorical devices such as exclamations, apostrophes and figures of speech, and they were presented either as suasoriae (or monologues) or controuersiae (or debates).

With the barbarian invasions, however, oratory lost much of its power and its scope was considerably narrowed. Despite this, the devices of classical rhetoric survived in the monasteries and, in the 14th and 15th centuries, they served an important function in compiling the public disputations that were an essential part of studies for the trivium.[2] The minute exposition and counter-exposition

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1 Samuel Dill, Roman Society in the Last Century of the Western Empire, London, 1905, pp.165-6.

2 The trivium comprised grammar, logic and rhetoric, preparing students for the quadrivium of arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy.

demanded by public disputation exercised an influence on the form of the sermon. Until that time, its form had primarily been based on the application of rhetorical expertise to an idea or theme. The debating skills developed in the course of public disputations added a new ingredient to the intrinsic form of a good sermon: the need for logical incisiveness and precise arrangement.[1]

Rhetoric received a new injection of life with Renaissance humanism. Traditional Greek models like Cicero were once again regarded as models to be followed. The revival of interest in classical studies which developed during the period of the Renaissance gave a further impetus to rhetoric. Training in rhetoric began to be regarded as a valuable part of general educational training. Early educationalists like Roger Ascham emphasized the importance of translation from and into Latin as a means of cultivating a good style.[2] Ascham equated the eloquent man with the good man and he implied that rhetorical training, properly applied, could form a reliable moral training:

> They be not wise therefore, that say, 'What care I for a man's words and utterance, if his matter and reasons be good?' ... Good and choice meats be no more requisite for healthy bodies than proper and apt words be for good matters, and also plain and sensible utterance for the best and deepest reasons:

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1 G.R. Owst in his two works Preaching in Mediaeval England, London, 1926, and Literature and Pulpit in Mediaeval England, Cambridge, 1933 (2nd revised ed.; Oxford, 1961), demonstrates the important rôle played by the sermon in mediaeval England.

2 Roger Ascham, 'The Schoolmaster' in Works, London, 1815, pp.255-8.

> 'In which two points standeth perfect eloquence, one of the fairest and rarest gifts that God doth give to man'.[1]

The effects of the Reformation also considerably influenced the style of pulpit oratory. One of the most significant developments was the recognition that the sermon could serve as an invaluable medium for siphoning the new truths of Reformed religion to the ordinary layman. The sermon could thus serve a useful purpose in both religious and secular society as a medium for Reformed ideas, and it was at this point that the written discourse began to gain ascendancy over the extempore address. This new approach developed largely as a result of Protestant recognition that if the new doctrine was to be successfully transmitted from generation to generation, the established corpus of the new faith must be passed on. The written discourse, or sermon, delivered in public, was the obvious vehicle to choose.

Why should the written discourse seem to present so few problems to the 17th-century sermon-writer? Partly this was so because the exercise of writing theses was a normal part of the medieval school curriculum. A thesis consisted of a written statement following the fixed divisions (or parts) of the theme: exordium, narratio, confirmatio, confutatio and conclusio. When he composed a thesis, an author frequently drew upon the resources of the commonplace book,

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1 Roger Ascham, 'The Schoolmaster' in Works, London, 1815, p.285, the first section of which is quoted by W. Fraser Mitchell, English Pulpit Oratory, p.71.

which contained a selection of appropriate texts and quotations.[1] It was, therefore, only a short step from excerpting passages from commonplace books to assist in the composing of themes and orations at school to using them for rhetorical embellishment in sermon composition. Many 17th-century sermons often comprised little more than lengthy quotations from the commonplace book.[2]

The rigidity with which 17th-century sermon composition adhered to this practice can be deduced from a glance at the Latin oration that each incumbent for the Church was required to prepare. In his History of his own Time, Gilbert Burnet gives an account of the requirements for the oration:

> the Examiners allot a Head of Divinity to each, on which they are to make a Latin Oration, and to give out Theses upon it, which they undertake to defend in publick.[3]

The rules of rhetoric were thus being extended to apply to the composition of sermons, and the sermon, in its turn, began to absorb more and more Reformed content. Mitchell makes the point that as far as the 17th-century sermon was concerned, only the more extensive reading and

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1 The significance of the commonplace collection is also seen in the use of the term 'commonplace' to denote the exercises performed by fellows at daily prayers. These consisted of a text which suggested several lines of thought, often quotations from a commonplace collection.

2 In his edition of Claude's Essay on the Composition of a Sermon, Robert Robinson comments, 'many sermons of the last century are mere commonplace collections'. Robert Robinson, Essay on the Composition of a Sermon translated from the original French of Revd. John Claude, London, 1778, p.34.

3 Gilbert Burnet, History of His Own Time (1724-32), Edinburgh, 1753, ii,674.

'exigencies of exegesis' of the preacher separated him from the educated layman. Making theses and pronouncing orations were taught in common: only the preacher's concern with conveying the religious message distinguished him from his lay counterpart. This distinction was to become more pronounced as the concept of a 'sacred oratory' emerged; such oratory, however much it adhered to the common rules of rhetoric, was ultimately to be judged by considerations of its religious content and purpose.

The need for the sermon to create a lasting and indelible impression on its hearers led to prolonged discussion on the correct medium through which to convey the message. In the 17th century, this discussion resulted in a reaction against rhetorical embellishment in favour of a more ascetic mode of preaching, in which the sermon's effectiveness was to depend solely on the simple exposition of the essential message of Christianity. Clarity and precision of expression outweighed considerations of learning and rhetorical display. The new notion of preaching was based on the belief that a plain sermon was more effective than a sermon rendered ornate by the contents of a commonplace collection. If the message was true, as the Reformers believed, what further embellishment was required?

Strict adherence to formal methods of sermon composition was also favoured. As early as 1607, Richard Bernard set down in his work The Faithfull Shepheard[1] explicit

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1 Richard Bernard, The Faithfull Shepheard, London, 1607.

instructions for the correct division of a sermon text. Bernard's treatise was prompted by what the author considered a quite unjustified over-reliance on scriptural quotation in contemporary sermons. Bernard's new reading of the purpose and design of the sermon gave a minutely detailed account of how to find the 'intendment' of a text and mapped out guide-lines for textual interpretation. Admirable as Bernard's method may have been in outline, its excessive use in practice during the latter part of the 17th century led to unacceptable abuses. By the time that the best-known satire on Presbyterianism and Presbyterian sermons, Scotch Presbyterian Eloquence, was published in 1692,[1] this pattern was so widely recognised that Herle's Tripus (1655)[2] was cited as a typical example of the excesses of sermon division and subdivision.[3] So strict an emphasis on method and precise arrangement - often to the extent of adopting individual styles of preaching - made the sermon into 'a kind of manual of spiritual technology divorced alike from literature and oratory'.[4]

The desire for a formalized treatment of sermon texts in a simple unornate manner strengthened 17th-century

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1 The Scotch Presbyterian Eloquence; or, the Foolishness of their teaching discovered from their books, sermons, and prayers, London, 1692. The title was changed in the Rotterdam, 1738 edition to Scotch Presbyterian Eloquence displayed: or, the folly of their teaching discover'd from their books, sermons, prayers, letters, &c.

2 Tripus. (Three treatises published by Herle, prolocutor of the Westminster Assembly, 1655.)

3 Tripus, London, 1719 (3rd ed.), p.53.

4 W. Fraser Mitchell, English Pulpit Oratory, p.114.

suspicion of literary style and its conventions as a vital element in pulpit oratory. Samuel Clarke, in his account of the life of Richard Capel in the Lives (1659) remarked:

> Whereas now adayes, whilest some of our great Divines, seem to be too much taken up with quaint, and Historicall flourishes, there is a sensible decay of the power of God amongst us. An Exotick or strange tongue in the publick Congregation (whatever men think of it) is set out as a sign of Gods displeasure .... This curious age is too much given to the affectation of words, and phrases, and cadencies: and holy Doctor Sibs was wont to say, that great affectation, and good affections seldome go together.[1]

There were, of course, still some preachers who continued to use rhetorical devices in composing their sermons, but the accepted model for the successful sermon was the plain exposition of textual doctrine. The ideal sermon must avoid, equally, extraneous use of ornament and lapses into banality or over-simplification. As Henry Smith (whose sermons exercised considerable influence on Scottish pulpit oratory) asserted:

> to preach simply, is not to preach rudely, nor unlearnedly, nor confusedly, but to preach plainly, that the simplest man may understand what is taught.[2]

The crux of Smith's plea in this statement was for a plain sermon. This plea is reiterated later in the fervent sermons of protest of 18th-century Evangelical sermon-writers against the lukewarm theological bent of contemporary sermons. In one of his sermons, Ralph Erskine, the Evangelical sermon-writer, condemned what he saw as:

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1 Samuel Clarke, A General Martyrologie. Whereunto is added The Lives of Thirty-Two English Divines, London, 1677 (3rd ed.), p.305.

2 Henry Smith, Sermons, London, 1592, p.120.

> a world of people that come under the name of wits, and people of fine taste, are pleased with no sermons but such as are artificially decked with the flowers of gaudy rhetoric and tricky oratory, and this comes to be preferred to plain, powerful, spiritual preaching.[1]

It is interesting to note that when he referred to 'tricky oratory', Erskine equated the use of rhetorical devices with the distortion of truth. The significant point at issue in the 18th century was, of course, the definition of what constituted 'plain, powerful preaching'. As we shall see, the Evangelical definition of what it constituted was too often synonymous with a lack of care for literary standards and with a deliberate disregard for literary style. The Evangelical position in the period after 1750 represented the very antithesis of the regard and affection for form and literary expression championed by the 'Moderate' sermon-writers. In his Account of the Life and Writings of Hugh Blair, John Hill hinted at Moderate dislike of Evangelical zeal when he commented of the function of the sermon-writer:

> High as is the authority upon which his precepts rest, they must be delivered with the mildness of a Christian. Even in the warnings which he is obliged to give, affection must be manifest; and though he 'knows the terrors of the Lord,' he must 'in meekness instruct those that oppose themselves.' The least symptom of arrogance would diminish his usefulness.[2]

What the nature of these divergences of opinion on what constituted good pulpit rhetoric was, we shall attempt to examine in succeeding chapters.

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1 Ralph Erskine, Works, Edinburgh, 1764, ii,250.

2 John Hill, An Account of the Life and Writings of Hugh Blair, Edinburgh, 1807, pp.71-2.

THE 18TH-CENTURY BACKGROUND TO THE SERMON

> Preaching has past through many different forms among us, since the reformation. But without flattering the present age, or any persons now alive, too much, it must be confessed, that it is brought of late to a much greater perfection than it was ever before at amongst us .... Our language is much refined, and we have returned to the plain notions of simple and genuine rhetoric.[1]

To a member of the 18th-century 'Moderati', Gilbert Burnet's claim would appear to be a slightly ingenuous one, set against their own more powerful claims to refinement in pulpit rhetoric. Burnet was, however, restating his contemporaries' regard for the 'plain sermon'[2] - a sermon which would convey the doctrinal message in a simple but convincing manner. Simplicity of style was regarded as essential to refinement, as Burnet states, but in the early 18th century, a 'plain' style was also regarded as proof of the fidelity of the message. The 'plain notions' to which Burnet refers were those of a 'simple and genuine' rhetoric, in direct contrast to the worst excesses of the sermon style satirized in Scotch Presbyterian Eloquence.[3]

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1 Gilbert Burnet, A Discourse of the Pastoral Care, Glasgow, 1762, p.163. The Discourse was first published in London, 1692.

2 As the century drew to a close, dislike of ornamental and over-elaborate sermon structures became associated with Puritan exaggeration. See James Downey, The Eighteenth-Century Pulpit, Oxford, 1969.

3 The emphasis on multiple division and subdivision of texts is also related to the tradition of academic disputation fostered by the 17th-century requirements of a public and private defence of a thesis as part of the scholastic requirements.

Yet despite Burnet's claims for improvement in pulpit rhetoric during the last quarter of the 17th century in Scotland, it was predominantly a period when pulpit rhetoric made few legitimate aspirations to literary dexterity or grace. The bulk of sermons extant from this period are essentially documents of Convenanting zeal, sermons delivered extempore at conventicles and wherever temporary meeting-places presented themselves. The sense of urgency with which these sermons were imbued, is reflected in the sermon form most frequently employed in their composition. Strongly Evangelical in intent, these sermons tended to consist of amorphous collections of scriptural phraseology, spiced with numerous texts to add flavour to the sermon, and culminating in impassioned appeals to sinners. Scant attention was paid to the application of rhetorical standards to their sermons or to the imposition of regulated order on either expression or sentiment. Form was sacrificed to content, and by and large, content consisted of the reiteration of a set <u>corpus</u> of doctrine. Almost no attention was paid to speculative thought. Instead, the sermon relied for its appeal on a direct confrontation between God and man (understandable in the circumstances in which these sermons were delivered) and on a climacteric appeal to souls. Robert Rainy, the 19th-century Evangelical, defended the sermons of these 17th-century field-preachers in this way:

> Culture, development of literature, development of taste, deliberate adaptation of means to ends, had been woefully checked and marred .... A man who

> preached as he could and when he could, in a house or on a hillside, was not likely to take much care of his style.[1]

These sermons, or 'folk sermons' as they might more properly be called, were delivered in an extempore fashion, often with little formal preparation beyond the general outline of the subject to be treated, and much of the task of correctly framing the sentiments in order to exhort the audience to piety was left to divine inspiration. In his Discourse of the Pastoral Care, Bishop Burnet offered the caution:

> Too close a thread of reason, too great an abstraction of thought, too sublime and too metaphysical a strain, are suitable to very few auditories, if to any at all. Things must be put in a clear light, and brought out in as short period, and in as plain words as may be ..[2]

The pulpit orators to whom this advice might sensibly have been addressed were not, however, so much concerned with the subtleties of speculative dialectic as with the business of cramming into a single sermon as much Biblical justification and exhortation as they possibly could. Where the fear that they might never have another opportunity to address their flocks was a real one, there was obviously a strong incentive to crowd a wide variety of material into a single discourse.

In his Discourse, Burnet insisted on a plain system of oratory with sermons composed on a single head:

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1 Robert Rainy, Three Lectures on the Church of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1872, p.77.

2 Gilbert Burnet, A Discourse of the Pastoral Care, Glasgow 1762, pp.165-6.

> A text being opened, then the point upon which the sermon is to be run is to be opened; and it will be the better heard and understood, if there is but one point in a sermon; so that one head, and only one is well stated, and fully set out.[1]

By Burnet's standards the oratory of 17th-century Scotland was, for the most part, crude and ungainly. The use of multiple heads and involved subdivisions of subject were the favourite devices of field-preachers like Alexander Peden and James Renwick. To Burnet, however, the abstruse word-pictures and allegorical bias of these folk sermons seemed an unnecessary display of rhetorical juggling. The end of such oratory, he believed, was not to enlighten but to damage the interests of religion. A sermon ought to observe a careful balance between over-reliance on the dictates of reason and an equally undesirable over-emphasis on the sublime: it ought also to be readily understood by those to whom it was addressed.

The claim that a good sermon ought deliberately to adjust itself to the standards and capacity of its audience is one which emerges again and again in 17th- and 18th-century Scotland. To elevate a sermon beyond the comprehension of its audience (an accusation from which many late 17th-century and early 18th-century divines could not absolve themselves) was regarded as indulging in rhetorical egotism for, as Burnet commented -

> the carrying these matters beyond the plain observation of mankind, makes that the whole is looked on as a piece of rhetoric; the preacher seeming to intend rather to shew his skill, in raising his

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1 Gilbert Burnet, A Discourse of the Pastoral Care, Glasgow, 1762, p.165.

> subject too high, or running it down too low, than to lay before them the native consequence of things.[1]

The need to make the content of a sermon appropriate to its audience as accentuated by Burnet in this comment, is a theme which persisted in theories of pulpit rhetoric throughout the 18th century. In a sermon entitled The End of Preaching and the Way to Attain it (1780), John Scotland stressed the same point:

> The subjects of preaching are always the same; but the mode of applying them ought to vary with the varying manners of different times and places.[2]

And in his Letters on the Eloquence of the Pulpit (1765), a treatise popular in Scottish ecclesiastical circles, John Langhorne made a similar plea.

> A discourse ... ought always to be adapted to the genius and manners of the congregation before which it is delivered.[3]

More often than not, adapting the sermon to the level of the auditory meant simplifying the religious message and applying a strict control over rhetorical embellishment in the sermon's presentation. Those who believed that the religious message should be geared to the level of the audience argued that a sermon that was too involved and complex hindered spiritual insight. Later on, as we shall see, this idea was to become associated with one of the

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1 Gilbert Burnet, A Discourse of the Pastoral Care, p.166.

2 John Scotland, The End of Preaching, and the Way to Attain it, Edinburgh, 1780, p.12. Scotland (1735-92) was licensed in Dunfermline and ordained to Eskdalemuir in 1763. He was a contributor to The Scotch Preacher, Edinburgh, 1777.

3 John Langhorne, Letters on the Eloquence of the Pulpit, 1765, quoted in the Critical Review, xix(1765),368.

basic tenets of the sentimental movement: that a simple idea, simply expressed, was the most effective instrument in moving the human passions.

For this reason, indulgence in 'epideictic flourishes' rather than concentrating on conveying the simple truths of the religious message tended to be regarded as a sign of pulpit egotism. James Stoddart, minister of Kirkintilloch, delivered a sermon on the Revival of Religion in 1764 in which he pursued the argument that clarity and simplicity of expression were the most striking characteristics of the sublime. He stated:

> I immediately conclude, that the preacher hath something else in view than the edification and salvation of his hearers, who through an affectation of learning, deals in elaborate periods, technical terms, quaint and uncouth phrases, forced images, and far-fetched metaphors.[1]

Stoddart's statement makes an interesting comparison with the similar insistence of writers in the sentimental movement that the emotions generated in a reader by a novel should be genuine feelings experienced by the author himself. Henry Mackenzie, author of The Man of Feeling (1771), maintained that this must be so if the novel was to successfully accomplish its aim of refining the 'human heart'. Sterne, writing in the sentimental convention, came in for some very severe criticism on this very count, both in his novels and in his sermons. Matters of religious faith and moral issues were serious topics to the sentimentalists,

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1 James Stoddart, The Revival of Religion. A sermon preached in the High-Church of Glasgow, April 10th, 1764, Glasgow, 1764, p.15.

and they felt that Sterne by attempting to unite humour and faith by applying wit to these questions, revealed himself to be a 'spiritual imposter'. Henry Mackenzie, for example, condemned the 'buffoonery' of Sterne[1] and the Monthly Review had this to say of the Sermons of Mr Yorick[2]:

> Must obscenity then be the handmaid to Religion - and must the exordium to a sermon, be a smutty tale? Tillotson, Clarke, and Foster found other means of raising attention to divine truths; and their names will be respected, when those of YORICK and TRISTRAM SHANDY will be forgotten or despised.[3]

To this extent, the sentimental movement and the protagonists of pulpit rhetoric were united in a search for a true and convincing 'simple and genuine rhetoric' or, in other words, for a convincing method of presenting to the layman the truths they wished to promote. The reviewer in the Monthly Review asks of Sterne:

> How can we think that a Preacher speaks from his heart, when his example belies his doctrine? or how can we believe that Mr. Sterne is serious, while Yorick is on the grin?[4]

The tradition passed on to the 18th century by the 17th-century pulpit did little to assist in the search for a 'simple and genuine rhetoric'. For the most part the sermons that survive from the 17th century are a motley collection of strongly Evangelical, elaborate and heavily structured 'characteristic' sermons. Many of these sermons acted as models for enthusiastic Evangelical religion in

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1 The relevant quotation is: 'He often is on the very verge of buffoonery, which is the bathos of wit, and the fool's coat is half upon him'. Henry Mackenzie, Anecdotes & Egotisms 1745-1831 ed. Harold W. Thompson, Oxford, 1927, p.186.

2 The Sermons of Mr Yorick - Or, Sermons by Laurence Sterne, London, 1760. 2 vol.

3 Monthly Review, xxii(1760),423.

4 Monthly Review, xxii(1760),423-4.

the 18th century, when the sermons of 17th-century divines took on a patristic rôle in the eyes of 18th-century enthusiasts. The sermons of the Covenanting field-preacher, Alexander Peden, for example, were frequently reprinted in the 18th century, particularly in the early part of the century; a sermon, modelled on Knox's more famous sermon and entitled The Lord's Trumpet sounding an alarm against Scotland, by warning of a bloody Sword (1682) had been reprinted three times by 1780.[1]

There was also handed down to the 18th century, however, the elegant tradition of the sermons of men like Robert Leighton and Henry Scougal, Episcopalians whose sermons were moderate both in content and in expression. Leighton's dismissal of dogmatic teaching and his almost mystical emphasis on the Christian imitation of Christ sets him apart as a pulpit orator in this period. Recollecting Leighton's preaching, Gilbert Burnet remarked:

> His style was rather too fine; but there was a majesty and beauty in it that left so deep an impression, that I cannot yet forget the sermons I heard him preach thirty years ago.[2]

Leighton's sermons were reprinted in collected editions of his Works in Edinburgh in 1746, 1748 and 1798. Henry Scougal's The Life of God in the Soul of Man (1677), a brief but highly mystical spiritual guide that impressed itself deeply on the mind of John Wesley in the succeeding

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1 Alexander Peden, The Lord's Trumpet sounding an alarm against Scotland, by warning of a bloody Sword, Glenluce, 1682. It was reprinted in the 18th century as follows: Glasgow, [?1720]; Glasgow, 1739; Glasgow, 1779.

2 Gilbert Burnet, History of His Own Time (1724-32), i, 135.

century, ran through at least sixteen editions in the 18th century. Of these, only four editions were published in Scotland[1]; by far the greater number were issued from London presses, an emphasis probably explained by Scougal's links with the Cambridge Platonists. There was, however, sale for the work in Scotland, too. A catalogue of books printed and sold by W. Millar, the Edinburgh bookseller (appended to the sermon delivered by John Bonar before the Society for the Propagating of Christian Knowledge in Scotland in 1752) lists Scougal's Life of God for sale, together with, among other works, those of Tillotson and Barrow.

In an article on 'The Theological Climate of Early 18th-century Scotland', Stewart Michie traces four distinct theological attitudes in early 18th-century Scotland.[2] One of these groups he terms 'old style Moderates' and he identifies as members of this group William Leechman, William Wishart, George Wishart and Robert Wallace. He further suggests that the theological beliefs held by these divines can be traced back to the attitudes of earlier 17th-century divines like Leighton and Scougal. Although orthodox enough, Leighton and Scougal were more interested in what Michie calls 'the nurture of spirituality, charity

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1 The Scottish editions were: Edinburgh, 1751; Aberdeen, 1753; Aberdeen, 1757; and Berwick, 1791.

2 Stewart Michie, 'The Theological Climate in Early 18c. Scotland', in Reformation and Revolution. Essays presented to the Very Rev. Principal Emeritus Hugh Watt ed. Duncan Shaw, Edinburgh, 1967.

and tolerance than in correctness of dogma'.[1] Michie points out as evidence of a link between these two groups that William Wishart wrote a recommendatory preface to the edition of Scougal's Life of God published in 1742.[2] Evidence of this nature tends to suggest an earlier parallel for the gradual divergence of position between Moderates and Evangelicals that came to a head in the 18th century.

CONTEMPORARY ATTITUDES TO THE 18TH-CENTURY SCOTTISH SERMON

With the aim of establishing a connexion between 18th-century training in divinity and the sermons that embodied these new concepts, it may be useful to consider the 18th-century Scottish sermon from the point of view of contemporary opinion about the sermon both as a literary genre and as a product of the influences that shaped its form. In a review of William Craig's Twenty Discourses on Various Subjects (1775), the Edinburgh Magazine and Review traced the genesis of the improvement in Scottish pulpit rhetoric to 17th-century sermon-writers such as Bossuet, Fléchier, Bourdaloue and Massillon. Comparing English progress in pulpit oratory unfavourably with the successes of the French pulpit, the reviewer went on to comment sadly:

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1 Stewart Michie, 'The Theological Climate in Early 18 c. Scotland' in Reformation and Revolution. Essays presented to the Very Rev. Principal Emeritus Hugh Watt ed. Duncan Shaw, Edinburgh, 1967, p.267.

2 Henry Scougal, The Life of God in the Soul of Man, Newcastle, 1742. Morren, in his Annals states that the preface was written in 1739 but the earliest edition with a preface by William Wishart appears to be Newcastle, 1742, followed by Edinburgh, 1751. Nathaniel Morren, Annals of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1838-40, i,314.

> If the English preachers have fallen short of the eloquence of the French, those of Scotland have been still farther behind. The genius of presbytery, and the manners of the people, were very unfavourable to a refined and polished eloquence.[1]

Although this indictment of the state of Scottish preaching is later offset by a more favourable report on the most recent productions of sermon publishing in Scotland, it does illustrate the general attitude of much of the periodical press to the flood of sermons that came their way for reviewing. From the 1750s onwards, issue after issue of the major periodicals was inundated with volumes of sermons for review. There were sermons by parish ministers and sermons by university divines; and, frequently, sermons edited by friends and published posthumously as benefit sermons. The periodical press generally took a very severe line with posthumous sermons. The Critical Review wrote in 1795:

> Of posthumous publications there is no species so common as Sermons, nor, for the reputation of authors, is there any so little entitled to encouragement; unless where either previously designed for the press, or committed to it for the benefits of persons in need.[2]

At the same time benefit sermons themselves were treated fairly charitably by the reviewers. The Monthly Review qualified its criticisms of the posthumous sermons of James Riddoch of Aberdeen by admitting -

> As Mr. Riddoch's compositions are of a practical and beneficial tendency, we wish them success; especially as we find that they are printed for the benefit of the author's widow.[3]

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1 Edinburgh Magazine and Review, iv(1775),662.

2 Critical Review, Second series, xiii(1795),38.

3 Monthly Review, lxxiv(1786),318. The work referred to is Sermons by the late James Riddoch, Aberdeen, 1786. 2 vol.

The great mass of sermons to come before the reviewers, however, were single publication two-volume editions of collected sermons. Very often, the publication consisted of a miscellaneous collection of sermons delivered in the author's own pulpit and subsequently published either at the request of his parishioners or, alternatively, through the author's personal desire or literary ambition. So common was the practice of publishing sermons in two volumes that James Murray, author of Sermons to Asses (1767), was prompted to comment in the satirical preface to his Sermons:

> There should have been two volumes of them for the sake of form, as this has become the customary way of publishing - But it was thought convenient to postpone one till such time as it should appear how the first one was received.[1]

In January 1806, Dr Lee wrote to Carlyle Bell about the suggestion that a selection of Alexander (Jupiter) Carlyle's sermons should be published shortly after his death. He wrote:

> It appears to me that the Sermons can never appear to greater advantage than now. They can hardly be considered in the light of posthumous Sermons as they were selected by the author with the view of being published several years before his death, and I do not think it will be a difficult matter to choose a sufficient number to form two octavo volumes.[2]

By 1776, the Monthly Review, groaning under the effects of the developing fashion for collecting sermons for publication (a trend which the Review considered to have

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1 James Murray, Sermons to Asses, London, 1767, preface, viii.

2 Copy of a letter from Dr Lee to Carlyle Bell, dated 6 January 1806. NLS MS. 3464, f.5. This collection of miscellaneous transcripts of letters to Jupiter Carlyle was published in TLS by H.W. Meikle in July 1943.

been adopted into Scotland from English convention), made a heartfelt plea for moderation:

> Collections of Sermons are become fashionable ... We have heard of a calculation, by which it appears that not fewer than fifteen thousand different sermons have been printed in the English language, within the last hundred years. Judge then, O compassionate Reader! what those Reviewers have undergone, to whose share the perusal of about one-fourth of the above number must have fallen! - and still we proceed, labouring in a circle, with no termination of our task in view![1]

In the early part of the century many of the sermons published in Scotland (with, of course, the notable exceptions of the sermons of Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine, Thomas Boston and some others) were the works of English divines. From mid-century onwards, however, Scottish sermons began to be represented on the literary market in increasing numbers. It is interesting to note that the treatment meted out by the periodical press to sermons in this period bears remarkable similarities in critical tone to that afforded to the new genre of the novel, which, by the 1770s, had begun to flood the market in a similar manner. Many sermon reviews follow a similar pattern to reviews of contemporary minor novels. The usual format consists of a general outline of the scope of the sermon or novel, followed by its dismissal as a literary artifact with a few pertinent, and often uncomplimentary, comments. Of the periodicals, the Critical Review and the Monthly Review are distinguished by the severity of their sermon criticism. Throughout the 18th

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1 Monthly Review, lv(1776),245-6. The remarks occur in a review of the first volume of The Scotch Preacher; or, A Collection of Sermons, by some of the most eminent Clergymen of the Church of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1776.

century, their columns echo with repeated pleas for greater refinement in pulpit oratory and more discrimination in sermon publishing. Where sermons fall short of these requirements, the reviews extend small mercy to their subjects. In its review of John Farquhar's Sermons on Various Subjects (1772), posthumously edited by George Campbell and Alexander Gerard, the Critical Review condemed the sermons for their affectation of language and style, asserting that:

> ...a warm imagination has made a multitude of ecclesiastical coxcombs.[1]

In contrast, the Scots Magazine, reviewing the same publication, made no major critical observations on the Sermons and, indeed, commended the sermons lavishly:

> We have nothing to add, but that we entirely agree with the learned editors in their opinion, that 'in these sermons a good judge will be at no loss to discern, in the preacher, an eminent clearness of apprehension, a correctness of taste, a lively imagination, and a delicate sensibility to all the finest feelings of which human nature is susceptible.'[2]

Such a protective attitude to indigenous sermons tends to suggest a rather partisan bias towards native Scots literary productions. It is, after all, the Scots Magazine that in adapting for its columns the Monthly Review's assessment of Henry Mackenzie's The Man of Feeling (1771), carefully expurgated all unfavourable criticism from the review and reported only what it presumably regarded as ample critical justice to a novel of Scottish provenance.[3] The waiving of

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1 Critical Review, xxxv(1773),372.

2 Scots Magazine, xxxiv(1772),488. The quotation is from the Monthly Review.

3 Scots Magazine, xxxiii(1771),427.

critical standards to admit national bias was not, however, a consistent practice characteristic of all contemporary Scottish periodicals. The Edinburgh Mazagine and Review could be just as scathing as any English periodical in its remarks on the merits or otherwise of Scottish sermons. For example, Vol. 2 of Robert Walker's Sermons on Practical Subjects[1] attracted some very unfavourable comment:

> In respect of sentiment, these sermons appear to us trite and common, and they are certainly, as to manner, void of novelty, variety, or vigour ... The observations and reasonings are often quaint, unsatisfactory, and inconclusive; and the language is sometimes feeble, and frequently incorrect .... The chief merit this author possesses is simplicity, and that he does in a considerable degree.[2]

The Critical Review took a similar view of Walker's Sermons, commenting that they were:

> destitute of those beauties which are necessary to attract the attention of a discerning reader. The author proceeds in the beaten track; and we attend him without any considerable information or pleasure.[3]

The Scots Magazine, on the other hand, noted the publication of Walker's Sermons by simply listing the eighteen sermon texts included in the volume. An extensive quotation from Sermon XVI was included in the review as a specimen of Walker's sermon style but no critical evaluation was made.[4]

Despite these divergencies of attitude on the part of Scottish periodicals, there were certain marked trends and

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1 Robert Walker, Sermons on Practical Subjects, Edinburgh/ London, 1791, 1775-96. 4 vol.

2 Edinburgh Magazine and Review, iii(1774-5),41.

3 Critical Review, xxii(1766),392.

4 Scots Magazine, xxvii(1765),593-4.

established criteria that were common to all the major periodicals. All of them, without exception, stressed the need for a more effective distinction between the requirements of sermons delivered in the pulpit and the demands of the published sermon. Secondly, there was a consensus among the periodical reviewers on the need for the refining of sermon language and, specifically, on the need for the expunging of Scotticisms from the published sermons of Scottish writers.

To take the question of Scotticisms first, it is fair to say that all the major critical reviews show a marked dislike for vernacular usage in the published sermon. The presence of Scots usages is singled out time and time again (frequently in apologetic tones) as a disfigurement of sermon quality. References to vernacular usages date, in the case of the Monthly Review and the Critical Review, from the 1760s onwards and multiply towards the end of the 18th century. In 1775, the Critical Review, in an otherwise favourable review of William McGill's sermon On the Death of Jesus, remarked that -

> in some places the language, otherwise correct, is a little disfigured with Scotticisms.[1]

James Bell's Sermon Preached before the University of Glasgow (1791) attracted the comment:

> A few Scotticisms may be perceived in the volume.[2]

Even Hugh Blair's Sermons did not escape criticism on this

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1 Critical Review, lxiv(1775),580.

2 Critical Review, iii(1791),469.

count[1], and as late as 1796, the Sermons of George Hill, Principal of St Mary's College, St Andrews, had the same charge levelled against them.[2] The singling out of Scots usages in published sermons reflected, of course, the general trend towards the standardization of the language used in written discourses. The need for Scottish writing to erase from its pages any trace of the vernacular tradition was strongly based in a general identification of the vernacular with connotations of parochialism and limited aspirations. In literary circles, this identification resulted in writers being encouraged to examine more closely both the form and the language they used in written discourses that were intended for a wider literary market than that of Scotland alone. The new requirements of polite writing that pertained in the fields of philosophy and belles lettres were also to be extended to apply to pulpit rhetoric. As early as 1722, James Craig, minister of the Old Kirk, Edinburgh, pled guilty, in the preface of his Spiritual Life, Poems on Several Divine Subjects, to the charge that -

> Such as understand the true Propriety of the English language will, no doubt, observe a great many Phrases, or ways of speaking that will be called Scoticisms.[3]

Craig craved indulgence for his linguistic shortcomings by attributing them to his lack of formal instruction in

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1 Critical Review, xxiii(1798),66. The review is of Vol.IV of the Sermons.

2 Monthly Review, xx(1796),476.

3 James Craig, Spiritual Life, Poems on Several Divine Subjects, Edinburgh, 1722, preface, x.

the English language. Later in the century, John Sinclair devoted a chapter of his Observations on the Scottish Dialect (1782) to Scots pulpit usages. The sermon, like other forms of literary activity, was gradually being expected to fulfil certain standards of content, style and language if it was to be considered a successful literary artifact. Throughout the 18th century, criticism of Scottish pulpit rhetoric was directed at improving these three areas of the sermon.

The second point of criticism of the sermon on which all the 18th-century major periodicals are agreed is the need for sermon-writers to distinguish between the demands of the delivered sermon and those of the published sermon. They argued that sermon-writers must clarify for themselves the differences between the demands of the small, generally receptive audiences for the delivered sermon and the demands of the wider, considerably more critical audience for the published sermon. The Critical Review suggested in 1760 that the delivered sermon possessed certain natural advantages.

> The minds of the hearers are warmed by the solemnity of the occasion; the voice, the figure and manner of the speaker encrease their favourable prepossessions, all of which advantages are removed as soon as the discourse appears in print.[1]

Sermons delivered from the pulpit had as their primary aim the instruction of their audience, and they, therefore, depended mainly for their success on the style of

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1 Critical Review, ix(1760),65.

presentation with which they were delivered. They were thus protected, it was argued, from critical appraisal on all other levels save that of the purely doctrinal. The sermon submitted to the press, on the other hand, at once lost its critical immunity and was judged by the same critical standards as applied to all other forms of polite literature.

> But when an author offers his productions to the world, he no longer addresses himself to the vulgar, but to men of letters, to persons of reading and taste, for such people are the only purchasers of books ....[1]

The successful delivery of a sermon in the pulpit was no guarantee at all of similar success on the literary market, if the sermon had neither elegance nor stylistic merit to attract and sustain the reader's interest. In a review of Robert Walker's Sermons on Practical Subjects (1766), the reviewer regretted that authors whose printed sermons had originally been composed for the pulpit frequently forget -

> that in the former case they address themselves to a popular congregation; in the latter to the learned world: and if there is nothing which is calculated to improve the understanding, or entertain the imagination, their works will soon be condemned to oblivion.[2]

Eighteenth-century reviewers were thus convinced that the provinces of the pulpit and the press were separate, divided by different sets of conditions and requirements. John Langhorne's comment on this matter was probably echoed by the majority of reviewers in the second half of the 18th century. In his Letters on the Eloquence of the Pulpit (1765), he stated:

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1 Critical Review, xxix(1770),161.

2 Critical Review, xxii(1766),392.

> In Discourses that pass through the press, a degree of elegance is required which is at least above the vulgar idiom, and which those who are accustomed to read cannot dispense with. He must still make a distinction between Sermons that are to be preached, and those that are to be read. Let the Preacher, who has elegance and power of Style to please and instruct in the closet, not wrap his Lord's talent in a napkin, but freely exert and extend his abilities in whatever capacity they may be of service - Let him write for the Press; but let him remember, that he is not then writing for the Pulpit; and when he writes for the Pulpit, let him likewise remember, that he is not writing for the Press - The provinces are distinct, and the Preacher must exert himself differently in each, if he would hope to do good in either.[1]

The attitude of reviewers to what they considered to be the unacceptable aspects of the 18th-century sermon is clear, but it is now relevant to ask to what extent these criticisms were well-founded. I do not propose at this stage to examine the content of 18th-century sermons, a subject which is reserved for a subsequent chapter, but a glance at the state of the delivered sermon in 18th-century Scotland may be advantageous in assessing the influence of the pulpit on contemporary secular society.

THE 18TH-CENTURY SCOTTISH DELIVERED SERMON

To any observer of the period, the most strongly-worded attack on the Scottish pulpit is the 17th-century post-Revolution pamphlet entitled Scotch Presbyterian Eloquence (1692),[2] which is assumed to be an Episcopalian reply to Gilbert Rule's A Vindication of the Church of Scotland (1691)

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1 John Langhorne, Letters on the Eloquence of the Pulpit, London, 1765, pp.53-4.

2 Thomas Maxwell, 'The Scotch Presbyterian Eloquence - a Post Revolution Pamphlet', in Records of the Scottish Church History Society, viii (1944),225-54.

and is pseudonymously signed 'Jacob Curate'. The pamphlet, frequently reprinted in the 18th century,[1] purported to expose the gross excesses of Presbyterian pulpit rhetoric. The examples in the pamphlet were drawn from sermons of an extreme Covenanting position, and frequent quotations were made from Alexander Shield's The Hind Let Loose (1687). Altogether, it offered a depressing view of the Scottish pulpit:

> The most of their Sermons are Nonsensick Raptures, the abuse of Mystick Divinity, in canting and compounded Vocables, oft-times stuffed with impertinent and base Similes, and always with homely, coarse and ridiculous Expressions, very unsuitable to the Gravity and Solemnity that becomes Divinity.

The Presbyterian position was, in turn, defended at length against this attack by equally enthusiastic pamphleteering, but Scotch Presbyterian Eloquence remained a thorn in the flesh of the good Presbyterian. Even at the end of the 18th century, James Beattie, while editing the Miscellanies of his son, James Hay Beattie, paid tribute to his son's uncommon 'delicacy' by describing the youth's curt refusal to look into 'such a book as that most contemptible one called Scotch Presbyterian eloquence displayed'.[3] In fact, much of the attack on Scottish pulpit rhetoric, certainly as far as the first half of the 18th century was concerned,

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1 The British Museum Catalogue lists eight editions between 1718 and 1790.

2 Scotch Presbyterian Eloquence, London, 1692, p.22.

3 James Hay Beattie, Essays and fragments in prose and verse. To which is prefixed An account of the author's life and character, Edinburgh, 1794, p.53.

was justified.[1] The majority of the sermons from this period comprised badly-constructed, ill-formed, rambling harangues with little to attract and even less to hold the listener's attention.

There were attempts at improvement and, from the 1720s onwards, such improvement was considerably speeded up. Evidence such as George Wishart's attempts to model his sermons on those of John Tillotson tends to confirm this. Edward Burt in his Letters from a Gentleman in the North of Scotland to his Friend in London (1759) commented of Wishart:

> This Gentleman, as I was afterwards informed, has set before him, Archbishop Tillotson for his Model; and, indeed, I could discover several of that Prelate's thoughts in the sermon.[2]

But, for all that, evidence of progress in terms of practical improvement in pulpit delivery was, save in a few isolated and individual cases, very slow. By 1731, however, attempts at improvement were significant enough to merit a word from Wodrow. Referring to the General Assembly of 1731 in his Analecta, he defended the older practice of allowing only more senior ministers to preach before the Assembly and the Commission and he condemned the new practice of nominating young men to carry out these duties. He described these men

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1 Parallel attacks on Presbyterian pulpit rhetoric are Archibald Pitcairne's Babell: a Satirical Poem on the Proceedings of the General Assembly in the Year MDCXCII ed. G.R. Kinloch, Maitland Club, 1830, and The Assembly: a Comedy, London, 1722.

2 Edward Burt, Letters from a Gentleman in the North of Scotland to his Friend in London, London, 1759, i, 209.

as 'Bright Youths' and 'Oratorical Preachers' and he interpreted their ascendancy in the Church as a movement pioneered by those who were -

> inclined to please the vitiated tast of those about the throne, and inclined to set the neu way of preaching and harranguing against zeal, and other things, as the pattern to be folloued by other Ministers, or that they are affrayed, lest, if others wer named, they would perhaps touch on some truths that are not moddish and complaisant enough for this time.[1]

Wodrow commended the pulpit skill of some of his own contemporaries like James Craig and Hugh Thomson, but his opinions tend to be both enthusiastic and biased. A more dispassionate and perhaps more accurate view is given by external observers. The anonymous author of the essay, The Fashionable Preacher (1773) summed up Scottish pulpit oratory in these extreme terms:

> One cants, and whins, and sings it away with the greatest gravity; another bawls out with such a violent vociferation as shocks every one who has the least sense of decorum; a third makes such wry faces, such wild, unnatural gesticulations, as are enough to turn preaching into burlesque; while a fourth, by his cold indifferent manner preaches the half of his audience asleep.[2]

Another external observer of the Scottish pulpit, Edward Burt, commented on the state of the pulpit in his Letters from a Gentleman in the North of Scotland to his Friend in London (1759). He gave a lengthy and detailed account (with illustrations) of the idiosyncratic methods of Scottish preachers, and he concluded sadly:

> Not to trouble you with any more Particulars of their Oddities from the Pulpit, I shall only say, that since I have been in this Country, I have heard so

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1 Robert Wodrow, Analecta, Edinburgh, 1843, iv, 239.

2 The Fashionable Preacher: an Essay, Glasgow, 1773, p.5.

> many, (and of so many) that I really think there is nothing set down in the Book called Scots Presbyterian Eloquence, but what, at least, is probable.[1]

Burt did subsequently soften his criticism to admit that the younger ministers were at that date 'introducing a Manner more decent and reasonable'.[2] His comments on the quality of Scottish sermons at that period are important, however, because they were made during the period when the shift in sermon taste from the products of the older theory of pulpit rhetoric (to which Burt refers) to a new respect for refinement in pulpit rhetoric took place.

The question of the extent to which the development of the refined or 'polite' sermon ever became widespread in Scotland is one which requires close examination, but it is reasonable to assume that Burt's stringent criticisms of the Scottish sermon would have been less valid in the second half of the 18th century. There were still, of course, the Evangelical sermons with their stress on doctrinal content at the expense of stylistic merit, but even these were toned down in emphasis and they were contained within a more simple framework than had been the case earlier in the century. By 1770, only the Seceding parties retained the characteristics of the older rhetorical bias of the sermon, principally, of course, because of its connotations of fidelity to the essential religious message.

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1 Edward Burt, Letters from a Gentleman in the North of Scotland to his Friend in London, London, 1759, i,213.

2 Ibid.,i,213.

Among his examples of Scottish pulpit rhetoric, Burt included extracts from pulpit dialogues, a rhetorical form popular in Evangelical circles at the end of the 17th century but which had died out by the middle of the 18th century. (Scurrilous reference to this practice is made in Scotch Presbyterian Eloquence.) The dialogue was usually enacted between the minister and a personified God or Devil or, alternatively, between Biblical characters and the Godhead. This is how Burt described one pulpit dialogue he heard enacted in an Inverness pulpit:

> One of the Ministers of this Town (an old Man who died sometime ago) undertook one Day, to entertain us with a Dialogue from the Pulpit relating to the Fall of Man, in the following Manner, which cannot so well be conveyed in Writing as by Word of Mouth.
> FIRST he spoke in a low Voice. -
> AND the L.G. came into the Garden and said -
> Then loud and angrily - Adam where art?
> Low and humbly - Lo here I am, Lord!
> Violently - And what are ye deeing here?
> With a fearful trembling Accent - Lord I was nacked, and I hid mysel.
> Outragiously - Nacked! And what then? Hast thou eaten, &c.
> Thus he profanely (without thinking it so) described the Omniscient and Merciful GOD in the Character of an angry Master, who had not Patience to hear what his poor offending Servant had to say in excuse of his Fault. And this they call speaking in a familiar Way to the Understandings of the ordinary People.[1]

This description may be dismissed simply as a highly-coloured account of the events in a single pulpit. There is, however, little evidence to support the view that average standards in pulpits were generally much higher. The sentiments of the dialogue quoted above might not echo

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1 Edward Burt, Letters from a Gentleman in the North of Scotland to his Friend in London, London, 1759, i, 211-12.

from the refined pulpits of the Canongate, but there were many mid-century pulpits from which they did. The following comment in William Peterkin's Dialogue between Mr Alamode, a young Gentleman of Fortune; and Mr Freeman, an aged Country Gentleman (1779), a dialogue on the relevance of public worship, confirms this view. At one point in the Dialogue, Alamode invites Freeman to spend Sunday morning inspecting a farm that he is 'improving', on the grounds that:

> Thus I think we shall more agreeably spend the forenoon, than if we went to church, and be condemned to hear any dull parson pour out his extemporary prayers, and lull us asleep with an unmeaning sermon. [1]

Despite this, there is evidence, even very early in the 18th century, that the public did have views on what they admired in a sermon and the qualities they regarded as constituting good pulpit oratory, as well as recognizing what did not. An extract from Wodrow's strongly-worded attack on the 'obnoxious' sermon he heard preached by William Armstrong before the Commission of the General Assembly in 1731, contains much of the early 18th-century sermon-taster's views:

> He preached to us upon doing good. He read his papers, in his Bible, in the grossest, most indistinct, and undecent manner ever I was witnes to. The write was so large that I sau the letters at a good distance when he turned the leafe; but at every six or seven lines he mistook the line, and read a wrong one, and called himself back in a very undecent manner. He had some scrapes and sentences from Tillotson's Sermons, very ill put together.[2]

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1 William Peterkin, The Excuses Urged by the Absenters from Public Worship Examined. A Dialogue between Mr. Alamode, a young Gentleman of Fortune; and Mr. Freeman, an aged Country Gentleman, Aberdeen, 1779, p.6. For William Peterkin (1743-88), see FES,vi,390.

2 Robert Wodrow, Analecta, Edinburgh, 1843,iv,240. William Armstrong (1692-1733) was minister of Canobie in the presbytery of Langholm. This was his sole charge in which he was succeeded by his son, William Armstrong (1711-49). FES, iv,229.

This extract contains three substantial points of criticism of contemporary 18th-century pulpit practice: the reading of sermons; the lack of doctrinal substance in contemporary sermons; and weak and incompetent delivery in the pulpit. These same points continue to be of significance throughout the century but, as the century advanced, the importance of doctrinal content and opposition to the read sermon became less marked among the Moderate wing of the Church, and they tended to become procedural points championed more and more by the Evangelical wing of the Church. The history of the Moderate sermon in the 18th-century Scottish Church is largely the history of the attempts of Moderate sermon-writers to model their sermons to the highest standards of elegance and taste.

THE READ SERMON

The read sermon was the butt of Evangelical opposition throughout the 18th century, but from mid-century onwards the Moderate portion in the Church began to incline more and more in favour of the read sermon rather than the extempore sermon. The Evangelicals, of course, remained hostile to the practice of reading sermons in the pulpit. Their opposition was largely founded in their belief that the read sermon lacked Divine conviction and, therefore, the assurance of the sermon delivered extempore, which the Evangelicals found it relatively easy to convince themselves was divinely inspired. Dislike of the read sermon in Evangelical circles in Scotland persisted beyond the 18th

century. This can be seen in the frequent references in the 19th century to 'paper-ministers' and their contemptuous dismissal as charlatans by the Evangelicals. In James Cameron Lees's novel Stronbuy (1881), the parishioner puts this view succinctly:

> Och, if ministers canna remember their ain sermons, how can they expect us to remember them.[1]

In 1726 the General Assembly remitted an 'Overture anent the Method of Preaching' in which the practice of sermon-reading was strongly criticized.[2] The objections propounded by the Assembly were two-fold. Reading a sermon, it was argued, was a less convincing proof of the essential truth of the religious message than an extempore sermon; and, secondly, the reading of sermons from the pulpit smacked of the rationalist sermons of Augustan divines (themselves a reaction against the fanaticism and intolerance of the impassioned sermons of the 17th century).[3] The reading of sermons was almost standard practice in the 18th-century English pulpit. Even John Tillotson, whose sermons were such a popular model for the early 18th-century Scottish pulpit, was reputed to have read his sermons despite David Brown's claim in his article 'The Text of

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1 James Cameron Lees, Stronbuy, 1881, quoted by A.L. Drummond, The Churches in English Fiction, Leicester, 1950, p.313.

2 John Cunningham, The Church History of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1882, ii,301.

3 Swift's comment in his Letter to a Young Gentleman indicates the gap between the attitudes of the English and Scottish pulpits on this point: 'I do not see how this Talent for moving the Passions, can be of any great Use towards directing Christian Men in the Conduct of their Lives'. Jonathan Swift, A Letter to a Young Gentleman Lately Entered into Holy Orders in Irish Tracts 1720-23 and Sermons ed. H. Davis, 1948, p.69.

John Tillotson's Sermons' that the longhand copies of Tillotson's sermons were probably never used in the pulpit 'where the practice was to preach memoriter'.[1] In the first edition of his Life of Dr John Tillotson, Thomas Birch, Tillotson's biographer, stated that Tillotson:

> read his sermons likewise with so due a pronunciation, and in so serious and solemn a manner, that they were not the feebler, but rather the perfecter .... For he was never capable of committing his sermons to memory, or preaching extempore, according to the custom of the earliest part of his life.[2]

However, an examination of the second edition of Birch's Life (1753) indicates that Tillotson's earlier method had been to preach memoriter (perhaps a partial explanation of his popularity in Scotland) but that he had subsequently changed to reading his sermons in the pulpit. In an appendix to the second edition of the Life, Birch quoted from a letter he had received in 1753 which included an anecdote on Tillotson's method of preaching. Tillotson was said to have made this comment to Dr Maynard, his successor at Lincoln's Inn:

> ...the Archbishop replied, that he had always written every word, before he preach'd it; but us'd to get it by heart, till he found, that it heated his head so much a day or two before and after he preach'd, that he was forc'd to leave it off.[3]

The opponents of the read sermon in Scotland found themselves on the horns of a rather unpleasant dilemma, however, when they had to recommend models of pulpit rhetoric

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1 David D. Brown, 'The Text of John Tillotson's Sermons', in Transactions of the Bibliographical Society, xiii (1958), no.1,18-36.

2 Thomas Birch, Life of Dr John Tillotson, London, 1752, p.23.

3 Ibid., p.417.

to young pulpit orators. The major figures of the Augustan pulpit all read their sermons, and if one turned to the French pulpit for models, Massillon and Fléchier were both Roman Catholics and, therefore, unlikely to be selected as models for the 18th-century Scottish pulpit. This may offer at least part of the explanation for the referring of young pulpit orators back to the seminal works on rhetorical theory or, indeed, to the classical foundations of rhetoric. Hugh Blair in his lecture on the 'Means of Improving in Eloquence' recommended students of oratory to Cicero's De Oratore and Quintilian's Institutes.[1] At the same time, one can detect a certain ambivalence in Blair's attitude on this point, for he cited Tillotson as the best contemporary sermon model at the same time as he condemned the practice of sermon-reading.

> Archbishop Tillotson's manner is more free and warm, and he approaches nearer than most of the English divines to the character of Popular Speaking. Hence he is, to this day, one of the best models we have for preaching.[2]

The three methods of sermon delivery employed in the 18th-century pulpit were: the read sermon; the memoriter sermon; and the extempore sermon. From mid-century onwards, the read sermon increased in popularity as elegant delivery and the architectonic design of the sermon became more significant. The concern with correct and elegant composition

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1 Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, London, 1783, ii, 244.

2 Ibid., ii, 123. '...the practice of reading Sermons, is one of the greatest obstacles to the Eloquence of the Pulpit in Great Britain.' Ibid., ii, 118.

(which by the 1760s had begun to extend into all branches of literary activity) may have suggested to the clergy that a sermon composed according to the new rules could best be delivered by reading from a manuscript rather than by memorizing or studying the subject so deeply in advance as to allow extempore preaching.

The read sermon could also, of course, be a convenient cover for neglect or lack or application to the task of sermon-writing. George Ridpath (1743-1772), friend of John Jardine, was the Moderate minister of Stitchel and Hume. He paid annual visits to the General Assembly where he enjoyed convivial debates with other clergymen.[1] His diary provides a vivid example of how cursory sermon preparation could be. In 1755 he recorded:

> Came home on Saturday to dinner and did something for to-morrow.[2]

In 1759, Ridpath introduced two separate diets of worship, giving a lecture in the morning and a sermon in the afternoon, thereby releasing himself from the task of preparing two lectures and two sermons. His diary gives detailed accounts of entertainments at the General Assembly and of his strong contempt for the enthusiastic activities of George Whitefield, but it is totally devoid of any detailed references to methods of sermon preparation or to the contents of his sermons or to their style. If George Ridpath's

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1 Henry Gray Graham, Scottish Men of Letters in the Eighteenth Century, London, 1901, p.94.

2 Diary of George Ridpath, Minister of Stitchel (1775-1761) ed. Sir James Balfour Paul, Publications of the Scottish History Society, 3rd series, ii,13.

attitudes to sermon preparation are compared with John Mitchell's account of how his father composed his sermons for the pulpit, one can gain a clear impression of how wide the gap between the two poles of Scottish preaching was. Mitchell records that his father, Andrew Mitchell of Beith, who was an assiduous sermon-writer and also a master of shorthand:

> neglected not his pulpit preparations, reserving constantly the Friday & Saturday for his work, to which he devoted these days closely, I might say almost uninterruptedly.[1]

The frequency with which the memoriter sermon was used in the pulpit depended to a large extent on the facilities of retention and memory of individual preachers. Some were gifted with strong powers of memory; others found it an insuperable task. Bryce Johnston, minister of Holywood near Dumfries (1771-1805) was fortunate, for although he wrote out his sermons carefully beforehand, he had the considerable advantage of a good memory.

> As his memory was uncommonly strong and retentive, he never had occasion to exhibit his manuscript in the pulpit, or even to avail himself of a compend or abridgement in the form of notes.[2]

On the other hand, Thomas Gordon, minister of Speymouth (1758-1784), found the task of memorizing his sermons unsurmountable. Despite his wish not to cause offence by reading sermons to a congregation where the practice was

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1 John Mitchell, 'Memories of Ayrshire about 1780', in Miscellany of the Scottish History Society, Edinburgh, 1939, vi, 314.

2 Sermons by the late Rev. Bryce Johnston, Minister of Holywood, with a Memoir of his Life, Character, and Writings by Rev. John Johnstone, Edinburgh, 1807, p.11.

almost unknown and certainly most strongly disapproved of, Gordon was unable to train his memory sufficiently well to memorize his sermons. He finally had to resort to memorizing the heads of his sermons and making an attempt at preaching extempore. His method, related by James Beattie in his account of Thomas Gordon prefaced to Gordon's Plain Sermons on Practical Subjects (1786) was:

> to resolve in his mind the several topics whereof he proposed that his sermon should consist, to make himself master of each, and to ascertain their arrangement by writing a few short notes on a bit of paper; and with this preparation he ventured, though in the beginning of his ministry with great diffidence, to preach extempore.[1]

From 1750 onwards, however, with an appreciable decline in the number of sermons modelled on those of other sermon-writers, and less evidence of sermon extracts appropriated from the convenient pool of extant sermons, the Moderate wing of the Church inclined more and more to reading their sermons. William Robertson, for example, 'never preached extempore, but always kept pretty close to his papers'.[2] When Simon Haliburton, author of the satirical Memoirs of Mas John Magopico[3], was presented to the charge of Castleton, Ettiltoun, Wheelkirk and Belkirk by Henry, Duke of Buccleuch,

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1 Thomas Gordon, Plain Sermons on Practical Subjects, Edinburgh, 1786, i,5.

2 The Thistle or Anglo-Caledonian Journal, i(1836), no.1,63.

3 Memoirs of the Life, Character, Sentiments and Doctrine of that celebrated Pulpit Hero, Mas John Magopico, Leith, 1761 (2nd ed.). The work is attributed to Simon Haliburton, of Ashkirk and Thomas Hepburn of Athelstaneford. The title 'Mas' is probably the 'Mess John' listed in John Sinclair's Observations on the Scottish Dialect as a ludicrous Scots term for a minister. Sinclair, Observations, 1782, p.226.

in 1749, his settlement was delayed because the presentation was strongly opposed by Lord Minto. One of the reasons advanced for the opposition to the settlement was that Haliburton read his sermons. The Presbytery, however, took a decision on 3 July 1750 that they -

> could not take the opposition under consideration, unless for some matter of life or doctrine, and that as to [Haliburton]'s using notes when he preached, there was no law of the Church against that, and that it was practised by several ministers of the best character.[1]

From the 1750s, violent opposition to the read sermon became more exclusively the hobby-horse of the Evangelicals, although Moderate sermon-writers like Hugh Blair did speak out against its lack of spontaneity and conflict with some of the principles of the polished rhetoric they wished to emulate. The memoriter sermon that fell gracefully from the lips of an orator without the artificial aid of notes or manuscript was generally accepted as the ideal sermon form. This was the form that satisfied all the primary aims of eloquence in Hugh Blair's definition of good rhetoric: the ability to convince and to persuade.

> Every sermon, therefore, should be a persuasive oration .... All persuasion, as I showed formerly, is to be founded on conviction. The understanding must always be applied to in the first place in order to make a lasting impression on the heart.[2]

But where human frailty or imperfection made the achievement of this ideal impossible, the Moderate reaction was to look kindly on the discriminate use of notes or manuscripts. A

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1 FES, ii,231.

2 Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, London, 1783,ii,221.

sermon that attained the required standards of literary elegance in all other respects could be forgiven the occasional downward glance.

Not so, the Evangelicals. Even a cursory glance at the 18th-century pamphlet siege on the read sermon provides a very clear statement on Evangelical loathing of what they regarded as the read sermon's unspontaneous and calculated message. Roderick Mackenzie, minister of an independent chapel at Nigg, published a pamphlet in 1752 entitled Reading no Preaching: or, a Letter to a Young Clergyman, from a Friend in London (concerning the unwarrantable Practice of Reading the Gospel, instead of Preaching it).[1] Mackenzie criticized the 'paper walls' erected between themselves and their congregations by ministers who read their sermons. He singled out the practice of reading sermons in the pulpit as a wholly English practice[2], and he referred back for confirmation to the spontaneous orations of Justin Martyr and Tertullian. He admitted -

> that the Age is critical, polite, and withal ill-natured, ready to improve the least Slip in Matter, Manner or Expression, to the Disadvantage of a Minister's Character. True enough.[3]

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1 [Roderick Mackenzie], Reading no Preaching: or, a Letter to a Young Clergyman, from a Friend in London. Edinburgh, 1752. Roderick Mackenzie was educated in Aberdeen (M.A. 1736). He was called to Lochbroom in 1743 but the settlement was reversed by the General Assembly. He went to England but returned to Nigg as minister of an independent chapel in 1758. He also published A Letter Showing the Consequence of the Present Pulpit Language, London, 1751.

2 Hugh Blair condemed the practice of sermon-reading in Great Britain and commented 'where alone this practice prevails'. Blair, Lectures in Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, ii,118.

3 [Roderick Mackenzie], Reading no Preaching, p.28.

but he compared the pulpit's seeming sensitivity to public opinion unfavourably with the intransigence of the bar. He considered it surprising that 'the critical Vein of the Nation should cow the Clergy to their Papers',[1] while other public speakers were undeterred by the forces of criticism. An anonymous satire on Moderate pulpit rhetoric published in 1773 in the form of an essay entitled The Fashionable Preacher referred, among its criticisms, to the activities of what it termed 'paper-geniuses':

> When a discourse is servilely read, the voice is strained and uniform, the action, if there be any, is awkward and generally the same, whatever be the nature of the subject: the reader addresses himself to his paper, instead of his audience ... It is from hence we must account for that aversion which the people always had, and always will have to the reading of sermons.[2]

Here again, opposition to the read sermon was centred on its lack of spontaneity. The author quoted from Fénelon's Dialogues Concerning Eloquence in support of his claim that the best oratory was that in which the content of the oratory was adapted to the capacity and needs of its audience; and the best orator one who could spontaneously adjust the tenor of his discourse according to the impression he saw his oratory make upon his audience. Such flexibility, it was argued, could not be achieved with the read sermon. The practice of individual ministers on this point - whether they read or memorized their sermons - seems to have been a point of note throughout the 18th century; a point to be noticed at least, even if not necessarily criticized.

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1 [Roderick Mackenzie], Reading no Preaching, p.29.

2 The Fashionable Preacher: an Essay, Glasgow, 1773, p.11.

Eighteenth- and early 19th-century biographers took care to state or explain the methods employed in the pulpit by the subjects of their biographies. The biographer of John Fleming (1750-1823), for example, pointed out that Fleming did not favour the read sermon and, furthermore, that he did not:

> at any time, make a practice of reading his sermons in the pulpit.[1]

Despite opposition to the read sermon and continuing pressure from the Evangelicals, the practice of reading sermons had made substantial progress in Scotland by the end of the 18th century. John Mitchell, writing of the Ayrshire of 1780, confirmed that by that date:

> discourses were usually read, rather than spoken, a mode of address which the people, especially serious people, at that time generally regarded with great aversion.[2]

By the end of the century, the progress of the read sermon in Scotland was significant enough to warrant mention outside Scotland. In 1794, a pamphlet published in Warrington entitled The Practice of what is called Extempore Preaching stated quite categorically that -

> the custom also of reading sermons to the people, by their ministers, spreads in Scotland, as it almost universally obtains among the presbyterians in England.[3]

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1 'Memoir of the late Rev. John Fleming of Craigs (1750-1823), Minister of Colinton' in Edinburgh Magazine, 1823, p.2.

2 John Mitchell, 'Memories of Ayrshire about 1780' in Miscellany of the Scottish History Society, Edinburgh, 1939, vi,307.

3 The Practice of what is called Extempore Preaching Recommended, Warrington, 1794, p.26.

In the period after 1750, Evangelicals in the Scottish church tended to identify the reading of sermons with the doctrinal lethargy and spiritual tepidity of the Moderate party. The Evangelicals were concerned that Moderate carelessness about the delivery of sermons was yet another instance of the diverting of Moderate energies from spiritual matters into the more profitable alternative pastimes of literature and agriculture. In his satire on Moderatism, The Kirkiad; or, Golden Age of the Church of Scotland (1774), Archibald Bruce isolated the reading of sermons as one of the characteristics of a 'clergyman of the modern variety':

> As for the work of sermon-making, '
> ...He thinks it is not worth pains taking:
> He ne'er did mount the rostrum yet
> Without all sure in black and white.
> For papers by him ever were
> Deem'd needful to a pulpiteer,
> As knapsack to the travelling soldier.[1]

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY SCOTTISH ORDER OF SERVICE

The form of service in the 18th-century Scottish Church consisted, in the early part of the century, of a lecture and a sermon, normally delivered twice a week. The lecture, expository in character, comprised a verse by verse commentary on a selected passage of Scripture, which was very often an extract from the Old Testament. Its purpose was to edify, or, in other words, to explain doctrinal matter to an audience with little or no recourse to Bibles of their own. Sometimes a particular book of the Bible, known as an

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1 Archibald Bruce, The Kirkiad; or, Golden Age of the Church of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1774, pp.19-21.

'ordinary', was selected and expounded upon, occasionally even for as long as two years. Bryce Johnston, minister of Holywood, it is recorded:

> in the years 1785 and 1786, delivered from the pulpit a course of Lectures on the whole of Revelation.[1]

The sermon, which in the early part of the century, followed the lecture, varied greatly in length. Wodrow stated that the most long-winded preacher he encountered was Hugh Thomson of Kilmaurs, whose sermons were never less than two hours but which, on occasions, lasted for four or five hours, too long for even such an enthusiastic sermon-taster as Wodrow.[2] By mid-century, however, the new interest in the architectonic design of the sermon and respect for clarity and brevity of expression led to fairly severe trimming of the sermon both in content and in length.

Length was, of course, to remain a significant feature of Evangelical sermons, but in many Moderate pulpits the whole order of service was appreciably shortened. The practice of weekday services began to die out; and both the division of the lecture and the sermon into two separate acts of worship (thereby removing the need for two sermons and two lectures), and the superseding of line-singing by more regulated forms of worship[3] did much to

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1 Sermons by the late Rev. Bryce Johnston, Edinburgh, 1807, p.51.

2 Robert Wodrow, Analecta, iv.203.

3 By an Act of 1746 the General Assembly recommended that people should cease to use line-singing in their family devotions, and that schoolmasters should instruct their pupils in the new common tunes. Nathaniel Morren, Annals of the General Assembly, Edinburgh, 1838-40, i, 87-8.

speed up this process. The trend towards a more streamlined form of service advanced more rapidly in Edinburgh than elsewhere in Scotland and, for that reason, it is dangerous to assume parallels between the situation in the pulpits of Edinburgh and that in other Scottish pulpits.

In the same way as sermons varied in length from pulpit to pulpit, so ministers differed greatly in the seriousness with which they exercised their responsibilities. The problem of plurality of office often had much to do with this. In 1780 the whole question of ministers simultaneously holding a number of offices was debated before the General Assembly. In a pamphlet published in the same year, James Burn objected to the precedent that would be created if George Hill, then Professor of Greek at St Andrews, was allowed to accept a parochial charge in the town. Burn denied that plurality of office was a novel idea for which no precedent existed, as was being claimed by the General Assembly, and in his counter-claim he instanced the cases of George Campbell, Professor of Divinity at Aberdeen (who although he held a Chair had no parochial charge, having resigned his charge on his appointment to the Chair of Divinity) and Dr Blair of Edinburgh (who although he held a charge restricted his university activities to a few hours a week). He continued:

> He, Hugh Blair too, I believe, only preaches, parochial visiting and catechising having for many years been little practiced in Ed-nb-rgh.[1]

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1 James Burn, A Narrative of Some of the Proceedings of the last General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (May, 1780) in Letters to a Friend, Edinburgh, 1780, p.24.

By contrast, the Evangelicals appear to have taken their duties very seriously indeed, and to have been required to do so to satisfy the standards imposed upon them by their congregations. John Erskine, in his preface to John Gillies's Historical Collections, records that the Evangelical Gillies (1713-96), minister of the College Parish, Glasgow,

> besides generally delivering three discourses every Sabbath, several years of his life were distinguished, by his instituting public lectures and serious exhortations, twice and often thrice every week ....[1]

In addition, Gillies also published a weekly news-sheet for his congregation, possibly the first minister to do so.[2] Evangelical taste for lengthy discourses is confirmed by John Mitchell in his account of the Ayrshire of the 1770s. He stated that an hour was the minimum acceptable length for a lecture or sermon; although, frequently, it was extended to two. James Boswell, too, described the situation in his Evangelical childhood, when he -

> was obliged to hear three sermons in the same day, with a great many impromptu prayers and a great many sung psalms, all rendered in a stern and doleful manner.[3]

By the 1780s, however, the winds of change were blowing even in Evangelical quarters. This is confirmed by Mitchell's

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1 A Supplement to Two Volumes of Historical Collections from the MS. of the late Rev. Dr John Gillies, with an Account of the pious compiler, and other additions by Dr John Erskine, Edinburgh, 1796,,p.86.

2 John Gillies, An Exhortation to the Inhabitants of the South Parish of Glasgow, and the hearers in the College Church. Nos. 1-21; Sept. 26, 1750-Feb. 2, 1751. Glasgow, 1750-51.

3 James Boswell, The Earlier Years 1740-1769 ed. F.A. Pottle, London, 1965, p.3.

admission that by that date in Ayrshire, 'a new taste sprung up, and shorter and more condensed methodical sermons began to be relished'.[1] By the end of the 18th century, the generally accepted duties of the clergyman were more or less along the lines indicated by William Singers, minister of Kirkpatrick-Juxta, in his Statement of the Numbers, the Duties, the Families, and the Livings, of the Clergy of Scotland (1808):

> The duties of the Scotish clergy are numerous and laborious. They officiate regularly in the public worship of God; and, in general, they must go through this duty twice every Sunday, (exclusive of other occasional appearances,) delivering every Sunday a lecture and a sermon, with prayers.[2]

The best Moderate sermon was, even in the 1770s, much simplified in framework and streamlined in intention. The manuscript sermons of the Moderate Dr Robert Douglas, minister of Galashiels, provide a clear account of the design of the written discourse prepared for the pulpit. Douglas's manuscript sermons are written out in full with later authorial emendations to the text of the sermons, but no abbreviated forms are employed. The sermons are divided into three major divisions:

1. Exordium,
2. Division of texts into heads.
3. The improvement or application.[3]

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1 John Mitchell, 'Memories of Ayrshire about 1780' in Miscellany of the Scottish History Society, Edinburgh, 1939, vi, 332.

2 William Singers, A Statement of the Numbers, the Duties, the Families, and the Livings, of the Clergy of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1808, pp.5-6.

3 Sermons of Robert Douglas of Galashiels (1770-1820). NLS MS. 3119, f.1. Douglas (1747-1820) was popularly known as the 'Father of Galashiels' because his capital resources did much to extend the village. He was a strong supporter of the Moderate cause and a friend and correspondent of Hugh Blair.

It was common practice for sermons on the same text to be repeated, with the same heads of division maintained but with the emphasis of the text changed. Douglas prefaced one of his sermons with the words: 'Having formerly preached from these words on such an occasion as this ...', and having delivered this apology, he proceeded to fashion a sermon which was identical in framework to an earlier sermon in the collection but with its emphasis altered.[1] Occasionally, Douglas avoided preparing a long sermon by appealing to the good sense of his audience. In a sermon written in 1763, he listed the divisions which he would like to have drawn from his selected text, but which he felt himself obliged to curtail. He wrote:

> considering how long you have been engaged this day in religious Exercises, by which your Spirits must in some Measure be exhausted, it would be improper now to detain you in the Evening with a long discourse; and therefore all I intend at present is ....[2]

On the question of plagiarism of sermons, it is more difficult to find Scottish parallels for the tolerance of attitude shown to the practice by the Augustan pulpit. There is some evidence of sermon plagiarism; and more substantial evidence of plagiarism of ideas rather than the direct uplifting of passages. There are, however, surprisingly few specific references to the principle of plagiarising the content and ideas of other men's sermons, apart from the Evangelicals' consistent condemnation of the patchwork quality of Moderate sermons and their misappropriated ideas.

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1 NLS MS. 3119, f.7.

2 NLS MS. 3119, f.37.

In his Presbyterian Dissenter's Guide in Choosing a Pastor (1781), George Cowie referred explicitly to this practice:

> And as most of our reading preachers in the church are thought to be thieves, I wish they would steal good sermons, and not murder them in the reading. A good sermon is still good as to the matter, tho' stolen; and it might sometimes be of more use than a bad one of their own making.[1]

James Murray, in his Sermons to Doctors of Divinity, referred to the practice of ministers who elevated the tone of their sermons for more refined audiences, and he commented:

> a schoolboy may be got for a few shillings who may write one of the best of them off in a fair legible hand.[2]

A volume of unsigned sermons in the National Library of Scotland illustrates many of the characteristics of the Moderate sermon prepared for delivery in the pulpit. A system of shorthand and abbreviated forms is employed; the sermons have divisions into two, three and four heads; there are parallel sets of notes on the same text indicating two attempts at the same sermon or, on occasions, a continuation sermon; and sermons on similar texts from different parts of the Scriptures.[3] What is striking is the evidence that, from the 1750s, authorial emendations to sermons were being dictated more by stylistic considerations than by questions of doctrinal content. Sermons were being pruned and trimmed to satisfy the requirements of simplicity and refinement

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1 [George Cowie], The Presbyterian Dissenter's Guide in Choosing a Pastor, Edinburgh, 1787, p.10.

2 James Murray, Sermons to Doctors of Divinity, London, 1800 (6th ed.), preface, v.

3 Volume of unsigned manuscript sermons, dated 1765. NLS MS. 2810.

that Moderate sermon-writers recognized was an essential passport to fair critical scrutiny. They also recognized that the refined sermon was a passport to public acceptance for men of taste were hardly likely to accept the sentiments of a sermon if they were repelled by its presentation.

How this progress in refining the sermon was achieved is the subject of discussion of ensuing chapters, but it is worth noting here that from mid-century the Moderate sermon underwent a process of paring and adjustment to meet the literary and critical requirements of the age. The author of A Second Letter to the Author of the Ecclesiastical Characteristics (1757), a pamphlet attributed to Andrew Moir, referred to the improvement in sermon composition among university students. The author stated ironically:

> I believe there never was such a pitch of perfection attain'd to in this particular; for not a few of our juvenes clerici are such masters of philosophy, rhetoric, and composition, that they can compose sermons merely of words, without almost any signification at all, and yet be accounted the only wits of the age.[1]

THE PUBLISHED SERMON

Eighteenth-century sermons, as has already been indicated, were characterized by the speed and the numbers in which they flowed from the presses, and the generally rather low standards of the sermons themselves. At the same time, the sermon was a genre popular with the reading public and,

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1 [Andrew Moir], A Second Letter to the Author of the Ecclesiastic Characteristics, wherein the improvement of the Presbytery of Edinburgh, and others have made in the author's maxims, are briefly illustrated, [Edinburgh], 1757, p.13.

for its most successful exponents like Hugh Blair, remunerative as well. The New Annual Register for 1780 noted that that year:

> hath produced a plentiful harvest of sermons .... The multitude of them is indeed so great, that any addition to them may be thought needless; ... the reverse however, of this is the case; Several collections of sermons have of late sold remarkably well, though none in a degree equal to those of Dr Blair.[1]

The circumstances behind the popularity of the published sermons of Hugh Blair will be dealt with in a succeeding chapter, but it is interesting to note that the two most widely published 18th-century sermon-writers - Tillotson in England in the early part of the century, and Blair in Scotland in the later part of the century - had certain characteristics in common. The sermons of both men were remarkable for their doctrinal restraint and lack of spiritual obtrusiveness. Both were attempting to place the sermon on an equal footing with other forms of creative activity. The confidence which booksellers placed in the commercial qualities of Hugh Blair's sermons can be assessed from Blair's own comment in a letter to Dr Robert Blair in 1790:

> The New Volume of my Sermons, the third, is about to be published here in 2 or 3 days. The Bookseller without the least hesitation has agreed to give me £600 for it; and well they might; considering what profit they made of 15 Editions of the two former ones.[2]

Most sermons, however, were published with few realistic hopes of winning high commercial success. Even Hugh Blair,

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1 The New Annual Register, or General Repository of History, Politics and Literature for 1780, London, 1793 (3rd ed.), i,200.

2 Letter of Hugh Blair to Dr Robert Blair, dated 14 April 1790. NLS MS. 588, f.1374.

when he first envisaged the publication of Volume 1 of his sermons, made a rather cautious bid for a small first edition in order to assess its commercial prospects. Blair maintained that his cautious approach was prompted by the potential vulnerability of sermons from the pen of 'The Professor of Rhetorick and Belles-Lettres in the University of Edinburgh'. In a letter in which he discusses the first edition of his sermons with an unidentified correspondent (probably Thomas Cadell, the London publisher), Blair remarked that Alexander Kincaid, the bookseller, had -

> out of favour to me, proposed to print at present only a small one ....[1]

Frequently, collections of published sermons were posthumous publications edited by a minister's colleagues or friends and, often, published for the financial benefit of his widow and family. This practice seems to have been fairly widespread in the 18th century, as a glance at the prefaces to some of the most miscellaneous collections of sermons reveals. The clergy were understandably sympathetic to the cause of sponsoring publications to assist the dependants of deceased ministers or, indeed, to help those in need. Henry Duncan (1774-1846), minister of Ruthwell and founder of the Savings Bank, even published an account of the execution of Maitland Smith for robbery and murder, in order to benefit Smith's widow and children.[2]

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1 Letter of Hugh Blair to an unidentified correspondent, dated 29 October 1776. NLS MS. 1707, f. 4.

2 Some Interesting Particulars of the Life and Character of Maitland Smith ed. Henry Duncan, Edinburgh, 1807.

Besides the published sermons of members of the literati like Blair, Carlyle, George Campbell, Gerard and others, sermons were also published by individual ministers. These were mostly sermons or selections from sermons delivered from the pulpit and published for the edification of members of their congregation and for others who wished or could afford to buy them. Sometimes, too, occasional sermons delivered on public occasions were later published. John Bisset of Aberdeen remarked in the preface to his sermon A Doctrinal Testimony against many Prevailing Evils at this Day (1744):

> I Had no Thoughts of publishing the following Sermon, but being urged to it by Hearers, you have it as it was preached.[1]

Bisset, who was preparing his sermon for the press in the 1740s, stressed the need for the strict veracity of the written to the spoken word. In doing so, he reflected 17th-century scruples when he insisted that the published sermon should faithfully transcribe the words actually delivered in the pulpit. Bisset also emphasized that no subsequent editing of the original version of the sermon had been carried out before the sermon was submitted to the press, and he commented:

> how agreeable the original [sic] Draught, they who heard, and now read it, will easily judge, it having undergone no Alteration by any Addition to, nor Diminution made from the first Draught, nor hath it buen so much as transcribed.[2]

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1 John Bisset, A Doctrinal Testimony against many Prevailing Evils at this Day, Glasgow, 1744 (2nd ed.), p.1.

2 John Bisset, A Doctrinal Testimony against many Prevailing Evils at this Day, p.1.

In Bisset's case, the high percentage of the typographical errors in the published version reveals only too visibly the lack of preparation for the press.

From mid-century, however, the editing of sermons for the press became more common among major sermon-writers, until by the 1770s it was almost standard practice. In most cases, the editing consisted mainly of the excision of faulty sentiments and expressions from the text of the sermon, or the substitution of one term for another more appropriate one. The published sermon often included on the verso of the title-page, the author's explanation for any divergences between the form of the delivered sermon and the printed version. Until the 1750s, the sermon was normally prefaced by a short 'Advertisement' or 'explanation', but from mid-century onwards, it became more common for an author to accompany his sermons by a preface explaining his literary methods in greater detail. For example, John Adam's sermon How a Minister should approve himself to God (1765) included a short note indicating that the printed version of the sermon had been expanded from that delivered in the pulpit. The aim was to accommodate -

> several enlargements, especially towards the end of it, which were thought too long to be delivered before the Synod.[1]

In the preface to his Sermon Containing a Comparison, arising from the subject of the Republicks of Athens and France (1794), John Ogilvie acknowledged that the printed version of his

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1 John Adam, How a Minister should approve himself unto God. A sermon preached at the opening of the Synod, in the High Church of Glasgow, April 9, 1765. Glasgow, 1765, p.1.

sermon was:

> very different from that which was preached at Mid-Marr and Aberdeen, on the same subject.[1]

The author justified these modifications to the printed version of his sermon on the grounds that they were necessary to meet the standards demanded by the literary market. Most frequently, however, publication for the press did not involve any appreciable change of sermon content. John Witherspoon, for example, maintained in his Seasonable Advice to Young Persons: a Sermon (1762) that the published version of his sermon comprised:

> considerable alterations and additions made in transcribing the Sermon for the press, but the substance is the same.[2]

As the question of stylistic merit began to assume greater importance in sermon-writing, the prefaces to published sermons began to include authors' apologies for failing to reach the standards of elegance that they recognized were demanded both by critics and by the discerning public. In appealing for sympathetic critical scrutiny in the preface to his Sermons on Important Subjects (1789), Niel Douglas, the preacher and poet, was simply following the practice of many 18th-century sermon-writers. He described how he had attempted to make his sermons acceptable to the illiterate and to the wealthy alike, and he continued:

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1 John Ogilvie, A Sermon Containing a Comparison, arising from the Subject of the Republicks of Athens and France, Edinburgh, 1794, preface, i.

2 John Witherspoon, Seasonable Advice to Young Persons: a Sermon, Glasgow, 1762, preface, ii.

> The Author is well aware, that the Discourses here exhibited to the Public are far from being formed on what is now deemed models of elegant sermons, nor is it indeed his ambition to excel in that way.[1]

The protective attitudes of Moderate sermon-writers to their sermons is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the post-1750 period. If an author stated in his preface the limits within which his sermon had been designed and composed, he could expect to have his Sermon critically assessed within these guidelines. The view was that a sermon written to appeal to all sections of the community should not be judged by the same high criteria of literary excellence as a sermon written for polite society. Sermon-writers often acknowledged or admitted that their sermons had only a peripheral claim to be considered as a literary artifact, and this admission often seems to have been employed as a device to arouse an immediate sympathy in the minds of readers and critics.

The prefaces to Evangelical sermons, on the other hand, frequently opened with a bellicose statement of intent, and Evangelical authors emphasized strongly their self-imposed immunity from any attempts at sermon refinement. Once an Evangelical author had stated outright his deliberate evasion or flouting of literary style, it was then assumed that the sermon would be assessed as successful or not solely on the grounds of the competence of its presentation of Evangelical doctrine. John Ker made his intended design clear in the preface to his sermon Obedient Believers the

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1 Niel Douglas, Sermons on Important Subjects, Edinburgh, 1789, preface, xii.

Friends of Christ (1775).

> If the reader expects in the following pages elegance of composition, and a display of the powers of oratory, or if he expects a philosophical harangue, he will be disappointed.[1]

The high proportion of post-1750 Scottish Evangelical sermons that contain prefaces expressing sentiments of this nature suggests a parallel in Evangelical minds between the refined sermon and 'light sermonizing'. In Evangelical circles, emphasizing the stylistic presentation of a sermon appeared to be synonymous with neglecting the true doctrinal 'ballast' of the pulpit. When, therefore, Evangelical sermon-writers came to present their sermons to the public, they frequently stated that they recognized the standards sought by the critical taste of the age, but they then confirmed their intention to deliberately flout the accepted canons of taste. John Jamieson in the preface to his Sermons on the Heart (1789) admitted -

> Various modes of expression, here used may appear antiquated, and unsuitable to the refined taste of this age ....[2]

The author then promptly continued to use the very terminology for which he had just apologized. The Evangelical sermon-writer thus very frequently prepared his audience for his breaches of accepted critical taste by deliberately playing down at the outset the importance of style in the overall purpose of the printed sermon.

Despite continuing Evangelical suspicion of any form

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1 John Ker, Obedient Believers the Friends of Christ, Glasgow, 1775, preface, iv.

2 John Jamieson, Sermons on the Heart, Edinburgh, 1789-90, i,preface,vi.

of editorial revision in the printed discourse, it became increasingly common for sermon-writers to screen their sermons prior to publication for language and sentiment that was contrary to good taste. It became a popular and convenient practice for writers to refer their sermons (in the same way as they referred other literary work) to informed contemporaries for critical scrutiny before finally submitting the work to the press. In a letter to an unidentified correspondent (probably Thomas Cadell), Hugh Blair related how he had been assisted in the task of preparing his sermons for the press. He had -

> given all the attention that was in my power both to the Composition and the Style, and they have undergone the careful review of several of our best judges here who would not wish my reputation to be endangered by them.[1]

Pressure to modify the texts of sermons for acceptance by a wider literary market was reinforced by the demands of the critics. In 1797, the Monthly Review, assessing James Gillespie's Sermons, condemned 'their lack of elegance', on the grounds that they had not received sufficient editorial attention.

> they have not had sufficient pruning and correcting for the taste of an enlightened and attentive public.[2]

In the early part of the 18th century, the high proportion of typographical errors and stylistic shortcomings in printed sermons can be directly traced to the fact that

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1 Letter, dated 29 October 1776, of Hugh Blair to an unidentified correspondent (ie. Thomas Cadell). NLS MS. 1707, f.4.

2 Monthly Review, xx(1797),69.

authors of sermons frequently did not receive proof-sheets of their printed sermons. Consequently, sermons were often printed direct from manuscript copy without receiving editorial attention at any stage of the process. As late as 1789, Niel Douglas in his Sermons on Important Subjects craved the indulgence of his readers in excusing the errata in his published sermons. Douglas claimed distance from the press as his reason for failing to supervise the proofs.[1]

In his sermon The Established Church of Scotland Vindicated (1775), Robert McCulloch, minister of Dairsie, made a similar apology:

> the author fondly hopes that his being at a considerable distance from the press will be sustained as a sufficient apology for them by the candid reader.[2]

On the other hand, Hugh Blair specifically stated in a letter to Thomas Cadell in 1793 that the fourth volume of his Sermons (like the previous three) should be printed in Edinburgh -

> in order to save the troublesome transmission of so many sheets to and fro, from London.[3]

Thus, the more discerning sermon-writers realized the necessary connexion between careful editing for the press and subsequent success on the literary market. In the latter part of the 18th century, a work pitted with imperfections

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1 Niel Douglas, Sermons on Important Subjects, Edinburgh, 1789, preface, xiv.

2 Robert McCulloch, The Established Church of Scotland Vindicated, Glasgow, 1776, p.3.

3 Letter, dated 25th October 1793, of Hugh Blair to Thomas Cadell. NLS MS. 948, f.8.

of style and careless phraseology could not reasonably hope to have its weaknesses glossed over, however acceptable its content doctrinally. To be popular and to sell, sermons had to satisfy the critical taste of the age in just the same way as other literary artifacts; and since the taste of the age was for delicate phrasing and elegant composition, a sermon had to conform to these requirements if it was to encourage the book-conscious section of society to buy it. It is worth noting here that the average price for sermons in Scotland from 1750 to 1800 appears to have been from five to seven shillings for a single volume, or from ten to twelve shillings for two volumes.

Evangelical literary appetites, with their taste for strong spiritual fare, were often more frequently satisfied with tract literature of a polemical bent, and with the sermons of a select corpus of approved patristic writings. In his Rural Recollections (1829), George Robertson gives an account of the literature favoured by the Evangelical husbandmen of the Lothians in the period up to 1765. These were -

> usually pamphlets, or religious tracts: such as Christian Ker, Elizabeth West, Peden's Prophecies, The Hind let Loose, and The Holy War.[1]

The expansion of the gap between 18th-century Evangelical and Moderate sympathies as it is expressed in the diverging choice of reference works and contemporary sermon material is the subject of a future chapter. It is important

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1 George Robertson, Rural Recollections; or, The progress of improvement in agriculture and rural affairs, Irvine, 1829, p.100.

to note here though that from 1750 onwards, as sermon-writers began to regard the sermon more and more as a literary and creative framework for improving ideas, they made a quite deliberate attempt to adjust their ideas on the function of the sermon to society's demands for aesthetic acceptability. To be effective the sermon required to convey its pedagogical teaching in a manner that was also aesthetically pleasing to its audience. This was the way to unify civilized society, for, as Alexander Gerard commented in a sermon in 1761:

> Let us, therefore, practice piety, which is the principal bond of social union.[1]

In a period when the pulpit had powerful access to society, it is important when examining the influence of the pulpit on contemporary society, to bear in mind the retrospective credo stated by a contributor to the British and Foreign Evangelical Review in 1854:

> There is, unquestionably, a preaching for the age. There is a style, a tone, a scope, a speciality of object in the administration of God's Word, at any given period .... And surely it is right that the progress of society in every form of talent, taste, and science, should tell on preaching.[2]

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1 Alexander Gerard, The Influence of Piety on the Public Good. A sermon preached in the High Church of Edinburgh, May 31, 1761. Edinburgh, 1761, p.30.

2 British and Foreign Evangelical Review, iii(1854),no.ix, 398-9.

CHAPTER 2

PULPIT RHETORIC IN 18TH-CENTURY SCOTLAND: TEACHING METHODS

PULPIT RHETORIC IN 18TH-CENTURY SCOTLAND: TEACHING METHODS

> A clergy-man, by his character and design of life, ought to be a man separated from the cares and concerns of this world, and dedicated to the study and meditation of divine matters.[1]

The spiritually-cossetted existence advocated by Gilbert Burnet for the 17th-century clergy provides a striking contrast with the unashamedly more temporal view of the clergy's rôle in society fostered by the adherents of what came to be popularly regarded as the 'Moderate' party in 18th-century Scottish church affairs. It should, however, be stressed that although it is tempting to divide 18th-century religious attitudes into two distinct camps as Moderates and Evangelicals, the dividing line is never a clear-cut one on the majority of matters, save possibly on that of patronage. Exceptions to the 'party line' on almost all other issues can be found in both parties. Hugh Watt comments of the period from 1750 onwards:

> There were shades of Moderatism and shades of Evangelicalism, and while the irrevocably committed were known and had acquired certain distinctive characteristics, a very large proportion were of an indeterminate shade.[2]

In a similar manner, Sir Walter Scott, in his sketch of the character of the Rev. Morton of Cairnvreckan in his novel Waverley, described with enthusiasm Morton's refusal to sacrifice the pulpit to a 'school for heathen morality',

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1 Gilbert Burnet, A Discourse of the Pastoral Care, Glasgow, 1762, p.1.

2 Hugh Watt, Thomas Chalmers and the Disruption, Edinburgh, 1943, p.6.

and he commended the way in which Morton held both the confidence of the 'common people' and the respect of the 'higher orders'. Scott commented:

> I have never to this day been able to discover which he belonged to, the Evangelical or the Moderate party in the Kirk.[1]

Any investigation of the background works that influenced pulpit rhetoric and sermon composition in 18th-century Scotland must recognize a certain degree of overlapping of sources between the two parties in the Church in the post-1750 period. Certain seminal works, notably the sermons of the divines, were consulted by members of both parties in composing their sermons. This overlapping of interests accounts, for example, for the Evangelical John Erskine's attempts to minimize the more ostentatiously unacceptable aspects of Evangelicalism while wishing, at the same time, to retain its doctrinal foundation. Although Erskine could not bring himself to give unqualified approval to the strongly literary bias of sermons preached in Moderate quarters of the Church, he found it equally difficult to accept Evangelical contempt for secular learning. In his sermon on the qualifications for the ministry in 1750, he declared that,

> without ... some acquaintance with natural and moral philosophy, history, antiquity, the best Greek and Roman Authors, and the arts of logic, rhetoric, and criticism, in an age of such learning, a Minister can scarce fail to be despised, and a despised ministry is seldom successful.[2]

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1 Sir Walter Scott, Waverley, Edinburgh, 1889, p.218.

2 John Erskine, The qualifications necessary for teachers of Christianity, a Sermon, Glasgow, 1750, p.31.

The primary advantage that secular learning conferred on Evangelical orators was the opportunity it conveyed from which to attack 'heretical' beliefs on equal terms, but Erskine's comment also illustrates that he recognized that in a prevailing atmosphere of literary improvement, the armour of a strong spiritual faith was not in itself sufficient to make religious allegiance attractive to contemporary society. Thus Erskine's views can be regarded as the middle ground between the two divergent religious groups, and they may also be seen as an attempt to effect a compromise between the need to transmit doctrinal truths and to satisfy the demands for literary refinement. In the same sermon, Erskine commended Hugh Blair's statement on the social value of Christian principles in the sermon he delivered to the Society in Scotland for the Propagating of Christian Knowledge in 1750:

> Allow me to adopt the reasonings of a late printed sermon, in which the importance of right principles in religion is excellently represented.[1]

The candid atmosphere that existed within certain of the shared Edinburgh charges is proof of the respectable relations that could prevail between two opposing figures, each personally committed to his own view of what form of religious presentation was best suited to 18th-century Scottish requirements. Henry Gray Graham confirmed the

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1 John Erskine, The qualifications necessary for teachers of Christianity, A sermon, Glasgow, 1750, p.28. The quotation is from Hugh Blair's sermon delivered to the SSPCK, The importance of Religious knowledge to the Happiness of Mankind, Edinburgh, 1750, p.17.

acknowledged existence of two schools of sermon style and content when he described the sermons preached to Edinburgh congregations in the 1760s and 1770s:

> If they were 'High-flying', they entered the door which led to the Tolbooth Kirk, where Dr. Alexander Webster entranced the 'Tolbooth saints,' as they were called, thrilling them by his fervid appeals ... If they enjoyed a solid, sound, yet intellectual discourse, they went into the Little Kirk[1] ... where Dr. Wallace ... might be heard discoursing elegant morality with a wholesome blend of doctrine, quoting Gray's Elegy, just published,[2] and comparing it with the finest specimens of classic poetry.[3]

Graham's comment reinforces the idea that from the 1760s onwards, there was fairly widespread recognition of a division between the style and content of sermons delivered from Evangelical pulpits and those delivered from Moderate pulpits; and also that churches were patronized according to the tastes of individual hearers.

To assign the sermons of one pulpit orator to the Evangelical camp and those of another to the Moderate camp is, however, a more difficult task. There was a certain degree of overlapping of views, and ideas were held in common: not all Moderate sermons were stylistic homilies on moral worth or refined essays on virtue as many of the more zealous Evangelicals would prefer to have believed. The sermons of George Hill, Principal of St Mary's College, St

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1 The Rev. Robert Wallace was minister of West St Giles' or New North, which was colloquially known as the 'Little Kirk' on account of its size.

2 A reference to Wallace's introduction of Gray's Elegy into one of his sermons also appears in Henry Mackenzie, Life of John Home, Edinburgh, 1822, i, 17. See also John Witherspoon's reference to 'parts of Addison's Cato, Young's Night Thoughts, and divers other poems, in sermons'. John Witherspoon, Ecclesiastical Characteristics, Glasgow, 1754 (2nd ed.), p.18.

3 Henry Gray Graham, Scottish Men of Letters in the Eighteenth Century, London, 1901, p.123.

Andrews, and leader of the Moderate party after William Robertson resigned in 1789, contain a high content of orthodox theology.[1] His Lectures on Divinity also show orthodox sympathies that link them more immediately with Evangelical rather than Moderate thought.[2] His biographer, George Cook, commented of him:

> He discouraged the practice of composing merely moral essays, pointing out the vast advantage to the cause of morality, afforded by the motives arising out of the great doctrines of the Gospel, whilst he checked every approach to those enthusiastical views, through which religion is regarded more as a matter of feeling and sentiment, than as a rational principle purifying the heart.[3]

In assessing the position of 18th-century Scottish preachers, one is therefore faced not simply with a division between those who favoured the 'Moderate' approach to religious questions and those who favoured the more orthodox approach; it is also necessary to account for those preachers who, while they were popularly assigned to one party, revealed characteristics of both. Rhetorical style and political position did not always require to be identical. A man who preached Moderate sermons could take a popular stance in church politics although this does seem to have been characteristic more of the early 18th century than of the period

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1 George Hill, Sermons, London, 1796.

2 Hill's Lectures were originally published as Heads of Lectures in Divinity (St Andrews, 1796), and later edited by his son, Alexander Hill, as Lectures in Divinity (Edinburgh, 1821). George Cook commented on Hill's work: 'he was, in the best sense of the word, a Calvinist ... His work, when given to the public, will be found to contain the best delineation and the best defence of Calvinistic theology which has, for a long time, been published ...' George Cook, The Life of the late George Hill, D.D., Edinburgh, 1820, p.225.

3 George Cook, The life of the late George Hill, D.D., Edinburgh, 1820, p.232.

after 1750.[1] In the Annals of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (1838), Nathaniel Morren referred to Henry Mackenzie's classification of George Wishart as a Moderate, and he commented:

> In classing Dr. George Wishart, with the Moderate Party, Mr. Mackenzie must be understood as referring more to his style of preaching, than to his Church-politics ... in matters of ecclesiastical polity, he was commonly found (at least in the early part of his career) rather on the popular side, like his brother the Principal.[2]

Having made this point, it is now necessary to isolate these elements in the 18th-century Moderate sermon that distinguish it from the Evangelical sermon; and, secondly, to investigate its appeal for those preachers who developed and refined the Moderate sermon into a genre. I propose to examine the rhetorical basis of the sermon in the 18th century in Scotland by considering the influences that contributed to its development during this period.

FORMAL TRAINING IN PULPIT RHETORIC: 1700 to 1800

Both contemporary and subsequent opinions agree that the need for formal training in sermon composition was to

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1 The acceptance of the idea that a clear-cut division existed between the two parties is confirmed by evidence such as the remark made by the reviewer of Alexander Ferguson's The Religious Establishment in Scotland examined upon Protestant Principles (1771): 'That our readers may be enabled to comprehend the occasion of this work, it is necessary to inform them that, in Scotland, the clergy have for some time been divided into two religious parties, distinguished by the names of the Orthodox and Preachers of Morality'. Critical Review, xxxii(1771),191.

2 Nathaniel Morren, Annals of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1838,i,318n.

a large extent unrecognized in the early part of the 18th century, and that the importance of sermon design and delivery in the second half of the century is remarkable by contrast with its earlier neglect. In 1718, Robert Wodrow, in a letter to James Fraser, Registrar of Chelsea College, concerning the publication of the former's History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland, reflected:

> I am not yet of opinion any thing that flows from my country pen will answer the English taste, and the niceness of the palate of this age.[1]

By the end of the century, however, the pamphleteering author of the satirical account of the Church of Scotland, A Full and Particular Account of the Trial and Condemnation of Mess John Presbytery, stated boldly:

> To read English with the proper accent, shall henceforth be considered the chief qualification of a fashionable preacher.[2]

The available evidence suggests that while control over the licensing of students of divinity as probationers was generally fairly stringent (at least in intent, if not in practice) in the pre-1750 period, very little attention was paid to the formal preparation and training of students for the task of preaching. An overture presented to the General Assembly in 1705 recommended that a student should be required to complete five pulpit exercises during the trials that preceded recognition as a probationer.[3] By a subsequent

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1 Robert Wodrow, Correspondence, Edinburgh, 1842, ii, 385.

2 A Full and Particular Account of the Trial and Condemnation of Mess John Presbytery, Edinburgh, 1798, p.13.

3 Overtures concerning the Discipline and Method of Proceeding in the Ecclesiastical Judicatories of the Church of Scotland. Acts of the General Assembly 1638-1842, p.349.

Act (presented first as an overture in 1742)[1] the number of exercises was reduced to four: a homily on an assigned text; an exercise and addition (that is, a sermon divided into two sections, the first textual and critical, the second containing the application); an exposition of a portion of Scripture; and a popular sermon delivered from the pulpit.[2] The overture also stipulated that before a student could be admitted to trials, he must have completed six years in the study of divinity after passing a full course in Philosophy at the College. The same overture authorized individual presbyteries when admitting candidates to trial to examine them privately for proficiency in Latin, Greek and Hebrew; the study of philosophy and knowledge of divinity (theoretical, polemical and practical); and, finally, to investigate their motives for entering the ministry.[3]

A candidate's motives for choosing the ministry as a career were to become a significant factor in the selection of suitable men for the Church. In his Autobiography Alexander Carlyle remarked,

> The sudden call for young men to fill up vacancies at the Revolution, obliged the church to take their entrants from the lower ranks, who had but a mean education.[4]

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1 The 'Overture anent licensing Probationers' was submitted in 1742 but delayed until 1747 for presbytery reports. It was then dropped during the period 1756 to 1779 because the required reports on the overture did not come in from the parishes. It was finally revived and eventually passed as an Act in 1782.

2 Nathaniel Morren, Annals of the General Assembly, i,34.

3 Ibid., i,34.

4 Alexander Carlyle, Autobiography, Edinburgh, 1860, p.249.

As the century progressed, however, motives of faith and calling to the ministry began to be superseded in importance by criteria of intellectual ability and social ease. One of the effects of this transition was to institute a certain degree of hesitancy about the basis of the decisions that influenced men towards a 'preaching career'. By the 1760s, when the majority of Moderates had satisfied themselves that a successful compromise could be effected between the pursuit of literary interests and the demands of the pulpit, 'spiritual faith' was often less of a significant factor in choosing the ministry as a career than intellectual competence and social standing.

The concern with maintaining high intellectual standards within the ministry took expression as early as 1722. In this year, the Presbytery of Perth remitted an overture to the General Assembly demanding an Act of Assembly to prevent the practice of Scottish students of divinity leaving Scotland to gain licences to preach from dissenting English ministers and then returning to Scotland to preach. The overture met with a favourable reaction:

> The committee paid great attention to this overture, it evidently appeared to them that the practice complained of was becoming very frequent, and had a tendency to produce among us, ignorant and illiterate candidates for the ministry.[1]

These moves, however, were aimed for the most part at

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1 'A Short View of the Last General Assembly (1772)' in a Letter to a Friend, Glasgow, 1772, p.15. The overture referred to was committed to the General Assembly and passed into an Act.

rooting out of the established ministry those elements that might impede its reputation on matters relating to soundness of doctrine. The emphasis on the correct training of candidates by approved methods was further strengthened in the second half of the 18th century. In 1774, the Presbytery of Edinburgh remitted an overture to the General Assembly requesting an initiative against candidates who attempted to arrange to be licensed outwith the bounds of the Church of Scotland.[1] In 1780, for example, there was the case of John Shank who, after studying at Edinburgh, tired of college life, studied privately and was later persuaded by the Presbytery of Arbuthnot to stand as a candidate for a charge. The Synod refused him probationary trials and when the matter was eventually placed before the General Assembly, the consensus was that private study without the solid foundation of a university training,

> has a tendency to fill the church with ignorant, illiterate, and misinformed men, to the great disgrace of the holy ministry, and entire destruction of the edification of the people.[2]

The Evangelical party in the Church, of course, continued to retain strict assessment of a candidate's spiritual beliefs as a factor of primary importance in admitting a candidate to the ministry. They did this on a grand scale, using it as an opportunity to goad the Moderates by deploring what they regarded as a decline in standards in the ministry,

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1 'Proceedings of the General Assembly' in Scots Magazine, xxxvi(1774),275.

2 'Proceedings of the General Assembly' in Scots Magazine, xlii(1780),274.

a decline in the state of religion generally and, in the period after 1750, a decline in standards of pulpit eloquence. Evangelical emphasis on 'decline' in a society where the key word was 'improvement' was to some extent related to their belief that many new incumbents chose the Church out of selfish considerations, believing it to be a comfortable position from which to expand their own private interests and pursuits.[1] Hugh Cunningham, minister of Tranent, in a diary written in the years 1785 to 1787, queried the serious intentions of a minister known to him who had entered the ministry after two thwarted attempts to enter other professions.[2] In a situation where motives for entering the ministry were open to question, it is perhaps not surprising that the Evangelicals viewed the entire Moderate party with suspicion.

While rigorous control over the content of sermons (mainly to eradicate all suspicion of heresy) was common from the beginning of the 18th century, only very slight attention was paid to the design and presentation of sermons. The General Assembly remained almost completely silent on the subject. An Act of 1706 simply enjoined

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1 See S.A. Woodruff, 'The Pastoral Ministry in the Church of Scotland in the 18c', Edinburgh, 1965 (unpublished Ph.D. thesis), where he quotes from one of Sir Walter Scott's letters in 1790: 'The narrowness of their stipends here obliges many of them to enlarge their incomes by taking farms and grazing cattle. This, in my opinion, greatly diminishes their respectability ... I would not have you to suppose there are no exceptions to this character, but it would serve most of them'. Letter from Sir Walter Scott to William Clerk, dated 6 August 1790, quoted by J.G. Lockhart, Life of Sir Walter Scott, London, 1896, p.46.

2 Diary of Hugh Cunningham, 1785-7. New College, Edinburgh, MS., f.50.

presbyteries to ensure that the stipulations of former Assemblies on the neglect of lecturing and expounding the Scriptures were implemented.[1] The first significant comment appears in 1719 in the 'Act for Promoting Religion and Learning in Universities and Colleges'. This Act, which was much more militant in intent than in its practical effects, stated that the General Assembly considered it to be its duty to promote religion and learning in the Church and that, in consequence, the Assembly had decided to,

> hereby instruct their Commission carefully to advert to every thing whereby they may contribute to the flourishing of the sciences and good literature, and to the propagating of religion and loyalty in universities.[2]

The lack of evidence of specific encouragement by the General Assembly towards improving the quality of discourses from the pulpit at this period, underlines the Church's more immediate concern with the accurate transmission of the religious message established with Presbyterianism in 1690. After the violent religious controversies of the late 17th century, the careful nurturing of the message was essential if the truths that had been fought for were to be perpetuated. What yet remained to be resolved was the best way in which to present the message.

In his article on 'The Theological Climate of Early 18th Century Scotland', Stewart Michie points to the badly-defined condition of Scottish religious thought in the early

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1 'Act anent Lecturing'. Acts of the General Assembly, 1706.

2 'Act for Promoting Religion and Learning in Universities and Colleges'. Acts of the General Assembly, 1719.

18th century. He traces the co-existence of four distinguishable theological attitudes and he identifies groups of ministers representing these attitudes.[1] Michie argues that the religious ethos of early 18th-century Scotland was 'legal-minded' and he cites the controversy over Fisher's Marrow of Modern Divinity in illustration of his point. While the Marrow controversy was to all intents and purposes a disagreement over the inclusion or exclusion of certain facts, it was also a reflection of a deep divergence of opinion over the question of what constituted pure doctrine. The concern with purity of doctrine is reflected in the 'Act concerning Preaching', which was presented as an overture in 1735 and enacted in 1736, and which laid down the religious issues that should concern preachers. The Act also stated that Professors of Divinity should instruct their students to conform to these rules in their sermons. The strict nature of the recommendations is clear from the Act's stipulation that:

> they [i.e. the preachers] forbear delivering any Thing in publick, that may tend more to Amusement than Edification, and beware of bringing into their sermons and publick Discourses, Matters of doubtful Disputation, which tend to gender Strife, rather than promote the edification of Christians.[2]

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1 The four attitudes are classed as : Scholastic Calvinists; Evangelical Calvinists; Old Style Moderates; and Rationalists. Stewart Michie, 'The Theological Climate of Early 18th Century Scotland' in Reformation and Revolution. Essays presented to the Very Rev. Principal Emeritus Hugh Watt ed. Duncan Shaw, Edinburgh, 1967, p.267.

2 Acts of the General Assembly, 1736, p.14. That the Evangelicals remained doubtful about the effect of the Act is shown by the comments in a contemporary pamphlet: There is great Reason to fear that the foresaid excellent Act concerning Preaching is but little observed by many, and that there is in this Church and Land very much of a legal or moral Way of Preaching, exclusive of Christ'. A short essay to prevent the dangerous consequences of moral harangues, Glasgow, 1746, preface.

A Church which was susceptible to the inroads of deistic thought, the heresies of Arminianism and Socianism and the added threat of private heresies and schisms, did not find itself in ideal conditions for an institution still in its uneasy infancy.[1] There was, therefore, little time to devote to considerations of a sermon's stylistic merit; it was much more important to ensure that its doctrinal content was above reproach.

Where the accurate transmission of fact from one generation to another was a primary factor in guaranteeing the survival of the message, there was less interest in or time for the discussion and arrangement of ideas for public presentation. In a pattern of this order, where little incentive was provided either by sermon models or by formal training in composing sermons, it is hardly surprising that early 18th-century Scottish sermons are rather indigestible to our changed sensibilities. The influence of liberal ideas and free inquiry had not yet made itself appreciably felt in Scottish thought; and it was only after its development that the Scottish sermon began to be regarded not simply as a catalyst for religious doctrine but as a focal point for advertising the new ideas and the social advantages of the good and civilized society. Referring to the

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1 G.D. Henderson suggests that the lack of pioneering theological activity in 18th-century Scotland may be the result of a conspiracy of silence after 'the heretic hounding of Simson, Campbell, Leechman & Wishart', and that there was instead a movement towards other forms of literary activity. 'Memorandum Book of John Grant carried to Edinburgh, 1771' ed. G.D. Henderson in Miscellany of the Third Spalding Club, Aberdeen, 1935, i, 106-7.

influence of the new moral sense school of thought that held sway in Glasgow under Hutcheson and Leechman in the 1740s, Alexander Carlyle commented:

> the clergy till that period were narrow and bigoted, and had never ventured to range in their mind beyond the bounds of strict orthodoxy.[1]

Carlyle's statement confirms that the confined limits of the early 18th-century clergyman's view of the world had begun to be recognized as a brake on clerical success. In the 'Act and Overture circulated in 1732 concerning the Method of Planting Vacant Churches' the General Assembly was careful to recommend that,

> Presbyteries, when the planting of any Parish falls into their Hands ... take care to have the same supplied with a well qualified Gospel Minister, to labour amongst the People for their spiritual Edification.[2]

At the same time, the emphasis was on improving the method by which doctrine was presented rather than on refining its literary style.

The tendency to interpret 'improvement' solely in terms of improving the content of sermons was further encouraged by the lack of any critical forum for ideas where discussion could take place on what a good sermon should be. The absence of a common platform for discussion and criticism of the sermon and its rôle, or investigation of the relationship between the preacher and his audience, tended to produce

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1 Alexander Carlyle, Autobiography, Edinburgh, 1860, p.84.

2 Acts of the General Assembly, Edinburgh, 1731, p.7. The Overture was finally passed as an 'Act anent the Method of Planting Vacant Churches' in 1732.

a stereotyped sermon and a one-sided view of what constituted successful pulpit oratory. The lack of societies and clubs for the sort of critical exchange that flourished in the latter half of the century, and the restriction of the use of the sermon to acting as a vehicle for communicating doctrinal truths, contributed to the limited influence of the early 18th-century Scottish sermon upon contemporary social and political events. Occasional sermons were preached to commemorate national occurrences or to mark political events but the active influence of the Scottish pulpit on the progress of society before 1750 was slight. It is interesting to note here what we shall see later, that where theological clubs did exist in the pre-1750 period, they do seem to have exerted an influence on the fashioning of pulpit rhetoric.

The conspicuous absence in the early 18th century of any serious criticism of sermon content can be seen from the relatively few assessments of sermons that survive from this period. The accepted standard appears to have been to use the same criteria to assess both the preacher and the sermons he preached. In the Analecta, Wodrow described James Craig as 'a very grave, modest man; a most fervent, accurat, and distinct preacher'[1], and Hugh Thomson of Kilmaurs as 'a piouse good man, and a fervent affectionat preacher'.[2] The assessment Wodrow makes of the sermons of these men is limited, in the case of Craig, to the phrase 'accurat and

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1 Robert Wodrow, Analecta, Maitland Club, Edinburgh, 1843, iv,200.

2 Ibid., p.203.

very patheticall'[1] and, in the case of Thomson, to the words, 'He had a vast deal of heads, and a great deal of matter, and generally very good and practicall, but very long'.[2] A lower value is placed upon commenting upon the design of the sermon than on the moral worth of the preacher and his style of delivery. Again Wodrow, referring to a sermon he had heard preached by William Armstrong in 1732, related that Armstrong had read his sermon:

> in the grossest, most indistinct, and undecent manner I was ever witnes to ... He had some scrapes and sentences from Tillotson's Sermons, very ill put together.[3]

The tone of Wodrow's assessment reflects personal criticism of Armstrong as well as criticism of his pulpit rhetoric.

These portraits of early 18th-century Scottish divines are significant principally because of the connexion they reveal between the classical parallel of the 'good orator' with the 'good man' and a similar parallel in early 18th-century Scottish thought between the 'good preacher' and the 'good man'. David Cooper, minister of Auchinleck, in a sermon preached at the opening of the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr in 1747, referred to the Quintilian parallel between moral virtue and fine oratory. He commented:

> If we would be good Orators, we must be good Men.[4]

The premise of this line of reasoning was that if a man was morally good, he would be bound to produce good sermons.

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1 Robert Wodrow, Analecta, Maitland Club, Edinburgh, 1843, iv,200.

2 Ibid., p.203.

3 Ibid., p.240.

4 David Cooper, Prayer and Preaching, the great Duties of Ministers of the Gospel, Glasgow, 1747, p.28.

This view was not new to the 18th century since Blaise Gisbert had earlier stated the same argument in his Christian Eloquence in Theory and Practice.

> I return therefore to my great Maxim, viz. Be a good Man if you would preach well ... Let your Profession therefore be a Motive with you to live well; and be assured that your Eloquence will encrease in the same measure with your Virtue.[1]

Later in the century, John Hill argued in his Account of the Life of Hugh Blair that the vision of the orator as a 'good man' was more indispensible to the divine than to the politician or lawyer, since:

> Men will forgive in the politician and in the lawyer, what they condemn in the Divine.[2]

In this statement, Hill was reiterating a comment made by Blair himself in his Lectures on Rhetoric when, as part of his discussion of the persuasive oration, Blair argued that an orator must himself be convinced of the ideas that he wished to convey to his audience. He commented:

> Now, if this be the proper idea of a Sermon, a persuasive Oration, one very material consequence follows, that the Preacher himself, in order to be successful, must be a good man.[3]

The connexion between the moral quality of the orator and the merit of his sermons persisted in 18th-century Scottish rhetorical thought. James Fordyce, in his sermon on the art of preaching in 1752, asserted that in the true preacher:

> Every word that proceeds from such a preacher, will be big with feeling and concern of mind ... He will speak naturally, for he will speak because he believes;

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1 Blaise Gisbert, Christian Eloquence in Theory and Practice trans. Samuel D'Oyley, London, 1715, p.96.

2 John Hill, An Account of the Life and Writings of Hugh Blair, D.D., Edinburgh, 1807, p.70.

3 Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres, Edinburgh, 1783, ii, 106.

he will appear in earnest, for he will be in earnest.[1] It is for this reason, for example, that the sermons of Lawrence Sterne were much criticized by his 18th-century contemporaries: the worldly mores and humorous gibes of Sterne's prose were thought to deprive his sermons of any intrinsic merit.

Thus, sermon criticism in the early part of the 18th century appears to have concentrated on assessing sermons according to how well they satisfied the criteria of content and delivery within certain generally agreed conventions, but the questions of any serious assessment or criticism of sermon form or desires for improvement were almost completely ignored. The changed emphasis which led to sermons being evaluated more and more by literary as well as by theological standards was founded in new developments in 18th-century thought and also, to some extent, in the need for a new approach to sermon-writing which was imposed upon preachers by the demands of sermon publication. In his work English Pulpit Oratory, W. Fraser Mitchell commented:

> The speaker who composes his orations with a view to their being afterwards read, and whose aim is twofold, namely, to produce sufficiently effective arguments to achieve his immediate purpose, andalso to employ such amplifications as will not only momentarily delight his hearers but also create in them the wish to possess his speech in written form,[2] is not only a rhetorician, but also a literary artist.

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1 James Fordyce, The Eloquence of the Pulpit, an Ordination Sermon, Aberdeen, 1752, p.39.

2 W. Fraser Mitchell, English Pulpit Oratory, p.50.

The increasing attractions of publication and, from the 1750s onwards, the greater demand for printed sermons, encouraged a shift away from considering the mode of delivery of a sermon in the pulpit as the most important aspect of the sermon and promoted a new regard for the printed text as a literary artifact that could be acquired and read. In 1760, the Critical Review cautioned eager sermon-writers by stating that,

> Sermons have lately, like every other species of writing, showered so thick from the press, that were not the principles of the reviewers well established, it were enough to give them a distaste for religion ... A couple of volumes are made out with scraps torn from the Practice of Piety, the Whole Duty of Man, some old sermons, and each discourse tipped with a text, divided into heads, and garnished with a variety of scripture passages selected from the elaborate performance of the learned Crudenus.[1]

The same reviewer made a further appeal to sermon-writers to identify and to distinguish between the separate functions of the printed sermon and the sermon delivered in the pulpit.

> Gentlemen of the sacred function should especially reflect on the great difference there is between pronouncing any composition from the pulpit, and submitting it to the cool judgement of the closet.[2]

Later in the century, the reviewer in the Critical Review for 1791 commented more favourably on the improvement in the attitude of preachers to publishing their sermons.

> ...and preachers begin to find that, if they will publish, they must pay due regard to the rules of composition, and the examples of the best writers.[3]

The Critical Review referred to this development as being

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1 Critical Review, ix(1760),65-6.

2 Ibid., p.65.

3 Critical Review, 2nd series, i(1791),49.

in its early stages in 1791, but the belief that sermons composed according to the correct guide-lines could satisfy literary conventions as well as fulfil their religious function was expressed earlier in the century, although the 'literary sermon' was welcomed by some and despised by others.

John Grant, minister of Dundurcas, attended the General Assembly in 1771 and in his Memorandum Book he commented disparagingly on a sermon he had heard preached while he was at the General Assembly.

> In the afternoon young Randal[2] at Inshture[1] Luke 10.20, an inacurate [sic] unconnected mass. He had a severe thrust at literary clergymen, nay, said they ought to neglect learning. The inference is obvious, he is neither learned, nor means to be so. For none even despise that they are masters off; and cost some trouble in acquiring.[3]

The anxiety to model sermons to accord with public taste did, however, reach a higher pitch towards the latter part of the 18th century. George Hill, for example, sought the advice of Hugh Blair on the advisability of publishing his sermons. In a letter dated January 1794, Blair replied in an encouraging vein.

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1 Thomas Randall, the son of Thomas Randall Senior, whom he succeeded at Inchture, Dundee, in 1771. By inclination an Evangelical, he was later translated to Lady Yester's and the Tolbooth, Edinburgh. He was author of A Sketch of the Character of Dr John Erskine, 1803, FES, v, 343.

2 Luke 10.20: 'Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.'

3 'Memorandum Book of John Grant carried to Edinburgh, 1771' ed. G.D. Henderson, Miscellany of the Third Spalding Club, Aberdeen, 1935, i, 122.

> With respect to publication, I see no reason why you should not take your measures for it. As to my Sermons, I do not think that they form any obstacle ... Quintilian says, very justly, 'Plures sunt eloquentiae facies'.[1]*

SERMON COMPOSITION (1700 to 1800): NEW METHODS

> This was the answer I gave to Patrick, Lord Elibank ... when he asked me one day, many years afterwards, what could be the reason that the young clergyman of that period so far surpassed their predecessors of his early days in useful accomplishments and liberality of mind, viz., that the Professor of Theology was dull, and Dutch, and prolix.[2]

The Abbé Maury in his Principles of Eloquence; adapted to the Pulpit and the Bar outlined his rhetorical theory for the improvement of pulpit rhetoric. John Neal Lake translated Maury's theory of rhetoric into English and, in a footnote to his translation, he commented on the state of contemporary British pulpit oratory:

> The Divines of the last century wanted, it is true, that accuracy and refinement of taste, which characterize some of our more modern discourses ... and in the present day the names of FORTEUS[3], DAVIS[4], GERRARD[5], OGILVIE[6], LEECHMAN[7], BLAIR[8], FORDYCE[9], HUNTER[10] and many others ...[11]

The strong representation of Scottish names provided in Maury's list as examples of good pulpit oratory reflects the improvement in the quality of sermons delivered from Scottish pulpits in the late 18th century in contrast to the low standard in the English pulpit. The process whereby improvement was achieved was strongly influenced and assisted by advances within 18th-century teaching institutions; and, also, by a gradual but consistent diminution in the power of the rigidly orthodox traditional view of divinity training in favour of an influx of liberal thought.

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* See following page for footnotes.

1 George Cook, Life of George Hill, Edinburgh, 1820, pp.250-1.

2 Alexander Carlyle, Autobiography, Edinburgh, 1860, pp.56-7.

3 William Porteous (1735-1812), minister of the Wynd Church, Glasgow, from 1770 to 1807. DNB,xlvi,169-170.

4 David Davis (1745-1827), Welsh poet and preacher, whose principal theme was universal benevolence. He was responsible for publishing a Welsh version of Scougal's Life of God in the Soul of Man (1779). DNB,xiv,163-4.

5 Alexander Gerard (1728-95), Professor of Divinity at King's College, Aberdeen, from 1760 to 1795, and author of An Essay on Taste (1759) and Sermons (1780). FES, vii,372.

6 John Ogilvie (1733-1813), minister of Midmar from 1759 to 1813, and author of The Day of Judgement: a Poem (1753); Poems on Several Subjects, with an Essay on Lyric Poetry (1762) and Sermons (1767). DNB,xlii,20-1.

7 William Leechman (1706-85), Professor of Divinity at Glasgow (1743-61) and appointed Principal at Glasgow in 1761. DNB,xi,832.

8 Hugh Blair, author of Sermons (1777-1801).

9 James Fordyce (1720-96), minister of Alloa from 1753 to 1760 and later minister of Monkwell Street Church, London, and a friend of Samuel Johnson. DNB,xix,433.

10 Andrew Hunter of Barjarg, Dumfriesshire (1743-1809), Professor of Divinity at Edinburgh from 1779 to 1809, and author of Five Single Sermons (1775). FES,i,137.

11 Abbé Maury, The Principles of Eloquence; adapted to the Pulpit and the Bar, trans. John Neal Lake, London, 1793, pp.190-1.

It has tended to be assumed that Francis Hutcheson (during his time as Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow) was responsible for shedding the first light on the rethinking of the function of the sermon in 18th-century Scottish society. In other words, it is suggested that the concepts of moral sense and virtue propagated by Hutcheson were absorbed by the students of divinity who attended his lectures and that they, in their turn, expressed these ideas in their sermons when they became preachers. Important as Hutcheson's work undoubtedly is in the annals of the 'literary sermon', there is evidence to suggest at least some injection of a more liberal approach to sermon-writing before Hutcheson took office in Glasgow. A move away from the verbose jargon and complex sentiments of the Evangelical sermon towards a more tolerant interpretation of the religious message can be detected earlier than 1729 when Hutcheson took office at Glasgow. Wodrow, in his Analecta, relates how in 1725 he heard Charles Telfer, a minister in Hawick,[1] preach a sermon in which he defined holiness as the duties of righteousness between man and man:

> And nou, Mr Telfer, Minister of Hawick ... His doctrine, on Munday, was, that the chiefe end of Religion is to promote holynes; and, when holynes was explained, it was restricted to the dutys of rightiousnes betwixt man and man.[2]

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1 Charles Telfer (1693-1731) was ordained to Hawick in 1723. In 1750 he preached before the Lord Commissioner to the General Assembly on the text Eccles.vii.10, and the next day he was called before the Committee on Overtures to explain certain comparisons he had used in his sermon. He was, however, dismissed without censure. FES,ii,114-15.

2 Robert Wodrow, Analecta,iii,239.

Telfer's attempt to measure the value of a man's religion in terms of its moral worth is an early example of what was to become more controversial later in the century: the contrast between Moderate belief that moral virtue and social worth were in themselves ample proofs of a man's religious well-being and the continuing Evangelical emphasis on the primary importance of a personal religious faith. The Evangelical Wodrow described Telfer's sermons as:

> his own make, and loose, generall, incoherent discourses, with some turns out of Shaftsburry, the Tatlers and Spectators, and such odd common-places for Ministers![1]

Wodrow's heated outburst in 1721 indicates clearly what he regarded as novel and intolerable: to him, and to his Evangelical contemporaries, the latitudinarian sentiments of Shaftesbury and the lukewarm essays of Addison were certainly unacceptable.

Wodrow also related how the sermons of William Wishart were thought 'to be copyed from Tillotson and others writters, and not so well said as in the printed books'.[2] Wishart, stated Wodrow, had confirmed these suspicions in his sermon the following Sunday by telling his audience:

> the great end of Revelation and Religion was holynes, or relative dutys we oue to one another, as members of a society.[3]

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1 Robert Wodrow, Analecta, iii, 240.

2 Ibid., p.240.

3 Ibid., p.240. The statement bears remarkable similarity to the sentiments of a sermon by Tillotson entitled 'Wherein lies that exact righteousness which is required between man and Man', London, 1677.

The dominance of 'sin, salvation and eternal punishment'[1] was already being eroded away before the new and enlightened ideas of the present.

The work carried out by Locke[2] and Tillotson[3] to create a rational foundation for revealed religion had, by this time, laid the basis for a latitudinarian mode of thought that stressed the reasonable and beneficial aspects of the Christian religion above considerations of reward and punishment. The quintessential elements of Tillotson's thought were later extended in English pulpit oratory by the sermons of Joseph Butler, George Berkeley and Samuel Clarke, but one of the seminal works in the dissemination of a reasonable view of religion was undoubtedly Tillotson's sermon His Commandments are not Grievous. This sermon was the most popular sermon of its day and its justification of religion on rational rather than on revealed grounds must have made its sentiments equally welcome to certain elements in the 18th-century Scottish church. A Church which was attempting to forget the embroiled religious disputes of the late 17th century and which was also being forced to come to terms with a society becoming both mercantile and secular, must have grasped thankfully at the words of John Tillotson:

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1 James Downey, The Eighteenth Century Pulpit, Oxford, 1969, p.11.

2 John Locke, Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690) and The Reasonableness of Christianity (1695).

3 John Tillotson's most successful sermon was entitled 'The Precepts of Christianity not Grievous' on the text John 1.3.

> Two things make any course of life easy; present pleasures, and the assurance of a future reward. Religion gives part of its reward in hand, the present comfort and satisfaction of having done our duty; and, for the rest, it offers us the best security that Heaven can give. Now these two must needs make our duty very easy; a considerable reward in hand, and not only the hope but the assurance of a far greater recompense hereafter.[1]

A promise of both worldly and eternal reward offered a most acceptable solution to the problem of combining personal advancement with eternal salvation.[2]

There were three dominant themes in Tillotson's preaching: the need for an appeal to reason in matters of religion; a distrust of spiritual intuition; and a stress on the imperfection of man's knowledge of God. The popularity of Tillotson's sermons in Scotland can be deduced from the number of editions of his works printed in Scotland (four editions of the Works had been published by 1772)[3] and by the frequent references to him in contemporary works. His influence on pulpit style exceeded his influence on doctrinal content. His sermons provided his followers with models that were exceptionally easy to imitate. His stress on the simple presentation of reasonable religious attitudes in measured and controlled language[4] and his horror of the

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1 John Tillotson, Works ed. T. Birch, London, 1820, i, 475.

2 The crux of Tillotson's doctrine was simply expressed: 'The laws of God are reasonable, that is, suitable to our nature and advantageous to our interest'. John Tillotson, Works, i, 468.

3 The editions were: Edinburgh, 1752; Edinburgh, 1759-69; Edinburgh, 1748 and Edinburgh, 1772.

4 In his panegyric A Sermon preached at the funeral of John Lord Archbishop of Canterbury (1694), Gilbert Burnet commented of Tillotson's style: 'He said what was just necessary to give clear Idea's [sic] of things, and no more: He laid aside all long and affected Periods: His Sentences were short and clear; and the whole Thread was a piece, plain and distinct'. Gilbert Burnet, A Sermon, London, 1694, p.13.

excesses of enthusiastic religion combined to produce a formal tone of high seriousness. His success has been explained in terms of his awareness of the direction in which the views of contemporary society were to turn:

> In the substance no less than in the form of his writings men found exactly what suited them - their own thoughts raised to a somewhat higher level, and expressed just in the manner which they would most aspire to imitate.[1]

The crux of Tillotson's popularity is contained in the last phrase of that quotation: the sheer imitativeness of his pulpit style. Ease of imitation was an important consideration to an age that accepted successful imitations of prose and poetry with greater grace than material that was original but poor in quality.[2] The expression of new and sensible ideas of religion from the pulpit required a model, and in the same way as Hugh Blair provided the model for the latter part of the 18th century, Tillotson acted as the model for the earlier part of the century. Tillotson stressed the onus on man to recognize the beneficial nature of God's treatment of him and the titles of the sermons he preached reflect this idea: 'The Wisdom of Being Religious'; 'The Advantages of Religion to Societies'; 'The Advantages of Religion to Particular Persons'; and 'The Excellency of the Christian Religion'. His sermons provided clergymen with guide-lines along which to fashion their own sermons, and the public popularity of his sermons in consequence of

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1 C.J. Abbey and J.H. Overton, The English Church in the Eighteenth Century, London, 1878, i, 279-80.

2 Note, for example, the acceptability of Alexander Pope's Imitations.

their accurate but comfortable expression of what people thought and wanted to hear, must have held out the promise of similar success to his imitators. In Letters from a late Eminent Prelate to one of his Friends, William Warburton enumerated the qualities of Tillotson's prose that lent themselves to easy imitation.

> They bear indeed the character of their author, simple, elegant, candid, clear, and rational.[1]

Tillotson's sermons exerted an influence on sermon style in Scotland, but there is some evidence to suggest that straightforward plagiarism of Tillotson's ideas was regarded as a failing in the sermon-writer, and that while Tillotson's abilities as a preacher were admired, the imitation of his sermons and adoption of his ideas was regarded as proof of a personal lack of ability on the part of the imitator. This was more true later in the 18th century when plagiarism and imitation in sermons became more generally condemned. In his poem The Kirkiad; or, Golden Age of the Church of Scotland (1774), Archibald Bruce satirized the lazy and incompetent preacher who plagiarized his material from Tillotson's sermons:

> Great Tillotson, if they can read,
> Can give a lift in time of need;
> The friend of clergymen distrest,
> As thou MacQuirk can well attest.[2]

In the invocation to Tillotson in the poem, Bruce satirized the Augustan preacher's influence on 18th-century Scottish

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1 William Warburton, Letters from a late Eminent Prelate to one of his Friends, London, 1809 (2nd ed.), p.127.

2 Archibald Bruce, The Kirkiad; or, Golden Age of the Church of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1774, p.19.

pulpit rhetoric:

> O Tillotson! illustrious name!
> Can I forbear to sing they fame?
> Dear Tillotson! soft rest thy head!
> Great pattern of the preaching trade![1]

By the 1770s when the Kirkiad was written, a shift towards a more 'sentimental' style had occurred in the canons of literary taste, and although Tillotson's sermons were still admired for their concise articulation of religious thought, their lack of stress on the persuasive appeal made them less acceptable as models for the late 18th-century Scottish pulpit. They contained no impassioned pleas to sinners and placed no confidence in the persuasive oration. For this reason, although he recognized Tillotson's stature as a model for good pulpit rhetoric, Hugh Blair nevertheless criticized the rationalist outlook of late 17th- and early 18th-century religious divines.[2] From the middle of the 18th century, Moderate sermon-writers were faced with something of a dilemma in their search for a sermon that would promote moral virtue and social endeavour and which, at the same time, would still be acceptable as a literary artifact. To do so, a sermon should avoid the barren speculation of a metaphysical essay but at the same time it should retain a rationalist basis; and it had to avoid enthusiastic excess yet succeed in moving the passions.

In the early part of the century before the vogue for sentimental elegance in pulpit rhetoric had emerged, this

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1 Archibald Bruce, The Kirkiad; or, Golden Age of the Church of Scotland, p.21.

2 Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres, ii,123.

dilemma was not an obvious one. The contrast was between the orthodox declamatory sermon and the compressed and rational homilectic. To those who sought to engineer a departure from the declamatory sermon, Tillotson's ethic with its overlay of Shaftesbury's 'moral sense' provided an obvious model. James Sempill, for example, preached a sermon on good works in 1725, in which the language he employed was that of Shaftesbury:

> Mr James Sempill of Dreghorn preached ... on, 'These that belive, let them be carefull to meantean good works,' and chimned in to the same tune. Good works wer described as what proceed from the right motives, and a right rule and end; but no word of Christ and his name and his strength.[1]

In the Rules of Good Deportment for Church Officers (1730), the author of that religious guide-book recommended as models for pulpit oratory:

> the Sermons of all the most applauded Preachers; such as Tillotson, Charnock, Barrow, Scot, Flavel, and Hopkins.[2]

Edmund Calamy, the English divine, paid a visit to Edinburgh in 1709 and, while there, he preached in the New Church on the text 'And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch'.[3] In his autobiography, he outlined the scope of the sermon he had given:

> I touched on the excellence and honourableness of that name, and showed what it imported and obliged those to that wore it. I afterwards pressed such as knew its value to be contented with it, and careful to answer it, without pretending to make any addition, by attempting which they would in reality take from it ...James

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1 Robert Wodrow, Analecta, iii, 239. James Sempill (d.1752) was ordained to Dreghorn in 1718.

2 [Adam Petrie], Rules of Good Deportment for Church Officers; or, Friendly Advices to them, Edinburgh, 1730, p.55. The pamphlet also recommends a shortened sermon of half an hour.

3 Acts xi.25.

> Webster ... took offence at it as Latitudinarian, and after I had left Edinburgh censured me, upon that account, publicly in the pulpit, making some peevish and angry reflections.[1]

These sermons attracted notice when there were no more intriguing political activities to divert public attention. When the repercussions of the Malt Tax riots were at their height in Glasgow in 1725, for example, sermons avoided the watchful eye usually kept upon them when there was nothing more important to interest the public. Wodrow commented:

> Too much has been given as an occasion, last year and formerly, to nottice Mr Wisheart and his keepers. Of this kind are reconed Mr Telfair[2]; the two Armstrongs, in the Merse[3]; Mr P. Cumming, Lochmaben[4]; Mr Wallace, Maffet[5]; and Mr Taylor[6] and Gybson[7], in Dumblain and Alloway, wer once numbered among them ... They generally preach upon the improvement of reason, or moral virtues, or generall vague heads; but faith and beliving in Christ ... these are things [which] do not enter into their discourses, and the gentlmen and persons of knouledge, as well as the meaner sort, are perfectly disgusted at their dry and abstract sermons and discourses of morality.[8]

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1 Edmund Calamy, An Historical Account of My Own Life (1671-1731), London, 1829, ii, 179.

2 Charles Telfer. See supra, p.100, footnote 1.

3 Probably James Armstrong and his son, William, ministers of the parish of Canobie in Langholm (1694-1719) and (1719-33). FES, ii, 229.

4 Patrick Cumin [Cuming] (1695-1776), Professor of Church History at Edinburgh University (1737-62). FES, i, 76.

5 Robert Wallace (1696-1771), minister at Moffat (1723-33), translated to New Greyfriars in 1733 and to West St Giles' in 1738. FES, i, 144.

6 John Taylor, minister of Alloa (1728-35), and later of the Tolbooth, Edinburgh (1735-6). FES, i, 119.

7 Archibald Gibson, minister of Dunblane (1719-28), and Lady Yester's Church, Edinburgh (1732-3). FES, i, 81.

8 Robert Wodrow, Analecta, iii, 360.

THEORIES OF PULPIT RHETORIC: 18TH-CENTURY SCOTTISH UNIVERSITIES

It is interesting to note that the majority of names cited by Wodrow (supra) as exponents of the new philosophy of preaching upon 'the improvement of reason' studied divinity at Edinburgh during the period 1710 to 1720. During this time, William Carstares was Principal (1703-15), John Goodall was Professor of Hebrew and Semitic Languages (1702-19) and John Cumming was Professor of Church History (1702-25). William Wishart took office as Principal in 1716. The existence of a group of men who preached on the topics cited by Wodrow suggests the influence of latitudinarian thought on these preachers through external sources or, alternatively, that they absorbed these ideas as part of their formal training.

As far as training in divinity was concerned in the early part of the 18th century, the main emphasis appears to have been on exposition and interpretation with almost no attention paid to training in composition or methods of composition. The account of the divinity course at Edinburgh given in An Account of the Government of the Church of Scotland (1708) indicates both the stress on exegesis and the absence of any formal training in sermon composition. The extract is given in full:

> The Students of Divinity are divided into Four or Five Classes, according to their Number, by the Professor. These Classes meet every Week, and confer together upon their Studies, or give account of what new Book they have read, what Material Things are observable in it ... The Professor attends upon his Students every Day of the Week excepting Saturday.

On Monday the Students perform some English Exercises prescrib'd them by the Professor some Days before, viz. First, a Homily or a popular Discourse. Secondly, a Presbyterial Exercise, or Exercise and Addition, wherein one Student for half an hours Time, Treats upon a Text critically, and solves all the Doubts and Questions that can be propos'd from it, and ends with a Paraphrase of the Text, from which another Student observes as many Doctrines, either implied or obvious as the Text will allow, and prosecutes them by confirming them, giving the Reasons of them, and applying them severally; but he is only allowed half an Hour. Thirdly, A Lecture, which is the Reading and Explaining by way of Paraphrase, together with some practical Reflections, some Portion of Scriptures. All these Discourses are censured by the Students in Presence of the Professor, as also by the Professor himself: and if there by any Thing amiss, the Professor directs them how to avoid such Faults for the Future. On Tuesday the Professor either hath a Lecture in Divinity (a Latin Discourse on some common Place) or else an Exercise is perform'd, which is called a Collatio Dogmatica; the precedeing [sic] Tuesday the Professor prescribes that they may be prepared to answer all Questions he shall propose to them from it; and it is perform'd thus, The Professor begins with a Historical Account of the Subject in Hand, then states the Matter fairly, and desires one to give Account of the various Opinions concerning it; asks another the Orthodox one, of a Third he demands the Proofs of that, and A fourth is desired to vindicate it from the Exceptions and Objections which the Professor proposeth against it; and after all the Professor explains the whole Matter fully and at large: This Exercise is all performed in Latin. Wednesday is appointed for the Junior Students, who have but lately commenc'd Masters of Arts, and entred [sic] the Profession: When, the Professor explains and examines them upon any little System of Divinity, Rissenius, Paraeus in Ursin, &c. Thursday is appointed for Exegeses and Disputations; an Exegesis is a Latin Discourse upon a certain Head of Divinity prescrib'd by the Professor, it begins with a short Introduction, which is usually the proposing the Method ... After the Exegesis is repeated (the Student having given in the Subject of it in Theses some Days before) is now oblig'd to defend them from the Objections [sic] propos'd by two or three other Students appointed for that End; but the Professor presides in these Disputations, and when the Respondent cannot answer, he answers, and resolves all Difficulties. The Method, Stile, Grammar, &c. of these Exegeses, are likewise censured by the Professor and Students.

On Friday some of the Students give an Account of some Period of Church History, or else perform a Scriptural Conference, viz. The Professor on the Friday

> before having prescrib'd a Chapter or two of the Bible, to two or three Students, they must be ready to answer all the Questions, either of the Sense, History, Reconciling Contractions, &c. that the Professor shall propose from it: during the Time the Professor takes occasion to explain all very fully.[1]

In 1708, under the aegis of William Carstares, new regulations were approved by the Town Council of Edinburgh by which the creation of independent disciplines was substituted for the earlier regent-based system of university education. This move by Edinburgh was followed shortly afterwards by the other Scottish universities.[2] This step in itself created the foundation for a comprehensive and deep-seated interest in developing individual disciplines which could be taught by men specially qualified to do so. There is also evidence to suggest a developing confidence within the Colleges at this time, as they began to recognize that they occupied an influential position for disseminating learning and new ideas throughout society. A.I. Dunlop, in his work William Carstares and the Kirk by Law Established (1967), refers to the rivalry that existed between the Colleges of Glasgow and Edinburgh on the methods by which students from the south could be attracted to study in Scotland. Edmund Calamy, the English dissenting divine, who visited the General Assembly in 1709, was offered the degree of Doctor of Divinity by William Carstares at Edinburgh and, subsequently, had the same degree conferred upon him at both

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1 [Charles Morthland], An Account of the Government of the Church of Scotland, London, 1708, pp.20-1.

2 Sir Alexander Grant, The Story of the University of Edinburgh during its first three hundred years, London, 1884, i, 263.

Aberdeen and Glasgow. Although the degree from Aberdeen was referred to on the diploma presented to Calamy by the University of Glasgow, there was no mention of the degree conferred by Edinburgh, an omission which aroused the considerable ill-feeling of William Carstares.[1] The existence of a spirit of rivalry between the two Colleges is confirmed by Wodrow in the Analecta when he comments on the competitive attitudes at Edinburgh in 1710:

> I hear that the Colledge of Edinburgh this last summer ... sent up Mr M'Kean to London with proposalls to the Dissenters, for sending their youth there, and very great offers.[2]

Thus as early as 1709, the concept of an expanding university or seat of learning that could attract and compete for students from outside its own national boundaries had taken root.[3]

There is also some evidence to suggest the early stirrings of a taste for polite literature at this time. In 1711, a pastiche on Addison's Tatler was published in Scotland. It was entitled The Tatler, by Donald Macstaff of the North and

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1 A.I. Dunlop, William Carstares and the Kirk by Law Established (Chalmers Lectures, 1964), Edinburgh, 1967, p.125. See also Robert H. Storey, A Character and Career of the Revolutionary Epoch (1649-1715), London, 1874, p.305.

2 Robert Wodrow, Analecta, i, 236.

3 The conferring of the degree of Doctor of Divinity on English dissenting divines was a popular practice in early 18th-century Scottish universities. Calamy records that in 1728 several clergymen had the degree conferred upon them by the University of Edinburgh, Edmund Calamy, An Historical Account of My Own Life, ii, 513-4.

it ran to 30 weekly issues.[1] It was a minor publication but it points to an early recognition that the conventions of English polite literature could usefully be adopted into Scotland.

The influence of Lord Shaftesbury and his teaching had also begun to percolate into Scottish thought at this time. In 1711, Shaftesbury had published his Characteristicks[2] in which he had dismissed the earlier view held by Hobbes and Mandeville that man was essentially evil.[3] Shaftesbury asserted, on the contrary, that man was basically virtuous; and that his primary aim was to live a reasonable life within a reasonable society. Shaftesbury credited man with an innate moral sense which was primarily emotional and which acted as his arbiter on questions of good and evil. Shaftesbury confirmed this belief in a letter to Michael Ainsworth in 1709.

> But be persuaded, in the mean time, that wisdom is more from the heart, than from the head. Feel goodness, and you will see all things fair and good.[4]

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1 The author of the periodical was Robert Hepburn of Bearford who became a member of the Faculty of Advocates in 1712 but died shortly afterwards. Alexander Fraser Tytler, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Honourable Henry Home of Kames, Edinburgh, 1807, i, 165.

2 Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times, London, 1711.

3 This was in direct opposition to the teaching of Hobbes and Mandeville. Mandeville had stated of Shaftesbury's philosophical position: 'Two Systems cannot be more opposite than his Lordship's and mine'. This quotation is an addition to the second edition of The Fable of the Bees. Bernard de Mandeville, The Fable of the Bees, London, 1723, p.372.

4 Letters to the Earl of Shaftesbury, London, 1746, p.26.

An essential component of Shaftesbury's system of morals was the equation of virtue with happiness, a connexion which led Shaftesbury to lay great stress on virtue, which he defined in the final paragraph of his Inquiry concerning Virtue, or Merit as:

> That single Quality, thus beneficial to all Society, and to Mankind in general, is found equally a Happiness and Good to each Creature in particular; and is that by which alone Man can be happy, and without which he can never but be miserable.[1]

A philosophy that conceived of man in terms of virtue and merit and which viewed the universal machine as a controlled attempt at universal order and good was certain to appeal to those whose scepticism about religious enthusiasm had been thoroughly aroused by the Presbyterian excesses of the late 17th century.[2] To them, Shaftesbury's gospel of the good man living a good life (with its implicit promise of social stability and prosperity) must have appeared a most acceptable design for living. Proof of the eagerness with which Shaftesbury's message was received can be assessed from the fact that by 1732, five editions of the Characteristicks had been published, later extended to eleven editions by 1790. (By comparison, nine editions of Locke's Works appeared during the same period.)

In Scotland, Shaftesbury's thought was responsible for injecting ideas of virtue and benevolence into the older

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1 Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times, London, 1711, ii, 176.

2 Shaftesbury published his Essay on Enthusiasm in 1709. In it, he condemned the display of unnatural religious feeling as being against the common good.

punitive-based system of moral behaviour. The effect of this new thought on contemporary society is described by Elizabeth Mure in 'Some Remarks on the Change of Manners in my Own Time':

> Nurses were turned off who would tell the young of Witchs & Ghosts, the Old Ministers was ridiculed who preched up hell & damnation, the minds was to be influenced by gentle & generous motives alone.[1]

The Evangelical attitude to Shaftesbury's ideas and to their influence on Scotland can be assessed from the disparaging comments of the Evangelical writer Henry Moncrieff-Wellwood, when he referred retrospectively to the influence of Shaftesbury's thought in Scotland:

> There was certainly in Scotland, at this time, a class of preachers who, besides the absurd affectation of bringing their public instructions from Socrates, Plato, or Seneca, rather than from the morality of the Gospel, distinguished themselves by an ostentatious imitation of the doctrines and phraseology of Francis Hutcheson and the Earl of Shaftesbury.[2]

But while the Evangelicals ridiculed, there were many who found just cause to praise Shaftesbury's ideas. In his Annals of the General Assembly, Nathaniel Morren quoted from a memoir of Robert Wallace, minister of New Greyfriars, written by Wallace's son, George, shortly after his father's death in 1771:

> His favourite modern was the Earl of Shaftesbury, a writer from whom he could not help sincerely regretting that he found himself obliged to differ in capital articles: and he was deeply impressed

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1 Elizabeth Mure, 'Some Remarks on the Change of Manners in My Own Time (1700-1790'. NLS MS.5003,f.8v.

2 Henry Moncrieff-Wellwood, Account of the Life and Writings of John Erskine D.D., Edinburgh, 1818, pp.59-60.

> with all that devout and rapturous admiration of the beauty and order, wisdom and beneficence of Nature, which this nobleman paints with a flowing pencil, in his Characteristics.[1]

Imitations of the content of Shaftesbury's thought and pastiches on his style were composed enthusiastically by those most in favour of change. Not infrequently, this enthusiasm led to an over-elaborate imitation of Shaftesbury's style that immediately labelled these productions as poor and limp imitations of the genuine Shaftesbury. In his Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Hon. Henry Home of Kames, Alexander Fraser Tytler instanced the work of Thomas Blackwell, Alexander Gerard's early teacher, as an example of the products of uncontrolled and unrestrained imitation:

> His model of imitation was Lord Shaftesbury; but, wanting taste and judgment, his copy is a complete caricatura. His Inquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer is instructive ... but the levity of the style, quite unsuitable to the subject, and the awkward mimickry of the ease and familiarity of Shaftesbury, in every sentence, render the work disgusting to a reader of good taste.[2]

In addition, the introduction of the deistic view of existence with its call for natural rather than revealed religion encouraged the idea that religion was within the bounds of human reason and, in consequence, detracted from the older view of religion as a 'mystery of faith'. In 1714, Thomas Halyburton, Professor of Divinity at St Andrews, commented in his Natural Religion Insufficient; and Reveal'd Necessary to Man's Happiness in his Present State on the

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1 Nathaniel Morren, Annals of the General Assembly, i,306. Robert Wallace was author of Characteristics of the Present Political State of Great Britain (1758).

2 Alexander Fraser Tytler, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Honourable Henry Home of Kames, Edinburgh, 1807,i,167.

advance of deism:

> The Infection spreads, and many are daily carried off by it, both in England and Scotland. Tho' it must be own'd that Scotland, as yet, is less tainted with that Poison.[1]

J.D. Mackie has suggested from his study of the Munimenta Alme Universitatis Glasguensis that a veering in spiritual outlook towards a more latitudinarian approach had occurred by 1714 but that it had taken place under the watchful eye of the General Assembly.[2] One of the corollaries of deistic thought was the search for other more tangible and practical expressions than faith and grace by which to judge a man's goodness. The work of Shaftesbury offered the acceptable concept of 'virtue' as a criterion for doing so; and his ideas were disseminated in Scotland largely through the work of his successor, Francis Hutcheson.

Francis Hutcheson matriculated at Glasgow University in 1711, the year in which Shaftesbury's Characteristicks was published. Very little concrete evidence exists about this period of Hutcheson's life or about the influence that his studies at Glasgow might have had on his subsequent thinking. In his history of the University of Glasgow, James Coutts records that of his professors, Hutcheson was most impressed by Alexander Dunlop, Gerschom Carmichael and John Simson. The pioneering content of Hutcheson's sermons in Ireland offers an indication of the direction in which his

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1 Thomas Halyburton, Natural Religion Insufficient; and Reveal'd necessary to Man's Happiness in his present State, Edinburgh, 1714, p.32.

2 James Coutts, A History of the University of Glasgow, Glasgow, 1909, p.218.

philosophical ideas were to develop; local reaction to his sermons is described in this anecdote from James Stuart's Historical Memoirs of Armagh (1819):

> Your silly loon, Frank, has fashed a' the congregation wi' his idle cackle, for he has been babbling this 'oor aboot a gude and benevolent God, and that the sauls o' the heathens themsels will gang to Heeven, if they follow the licht o' their ain consciences.[1]

Hutcheson's ethical theories were obviously being given an experimental airing in these sermons preached early in his career.

Hutcheson's leanings towards benevolence received further encouragement when, about the year 1720, he was introduced to the work of Lord Shaftesbury through a Dublin acquaintance, Lord Molesworth.[2] The existence of a climate receptive to the ideas of liberal thought is further suggested by the fact that the Glasgow students selected Lord Molesworth as their champion to uphold their cause when they sought representation in the matter of electing the Rector of Glasgow University. The students had lost this right under Principal Dunlop but during the Principalship of John Stirling (1703-28), some members of the university staff had joined with the students in support of their

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1 James Stuart, Historical Memoirs of the City of Armagh, Newry, 1819, pp.488-9, quoted by W.R. Scott, Francis Hutcheson, Cambridge, 1900, p.20. The revised edition of Stuart's Historical Memoirs ed. A. Coleman, Dublin, 1900, was largely rewritten for a Roman Catholic audience and does not contain this anecdote.

2 Robert Molesworth (1656-1735) was born in Dublin and held a diplomatic post in Denmark where he wrote An Account of Denmark as it was in the year 1692 which brought him to the notice of both Shaftesbury and Locke. He returned to Ireland in 1695, having absorbed many of Shaftesbury's ideas.

claims. In 1717, the students and staff elected a 'Mr Muir' to be Rector but his election was ignored by the University in favour of Sir John Maxwell, the choice of the Principal's opposition party. Two divinity students, Edmonston and Butler, supported by a number of University staff, raised proceedings at the Court of Session in Edinburgh, and the students also interested a number of Members of Parliament in their case, among them, Lord Molesworth, who agreed to support a petition that they had prepared to present to the House of Commons.[1]

Hutcheson published his Inquiry[2] in 1725 and three years later his Essay on the Passions (1728).[3] In 1729,[4] he was elected to the chair of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow after refusing a rival offer from Edinburgh. The most important aspect of Hutcheson's teaching approach at Glasgow was his departure from the older traditional methods of teaching. He himself expressed the relationship between his work and its reception in Scotland in the phrase: 'I am called "New Light" here'.[5] In his Life of Hutcheson, William

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1 James Coutts, A History of the University of Glasgow, Glasgow, 1909, pp.199-201. In 1722, when news of Lord Molesworth's re-election to Parliament reached Glasgow, a number of students lit a bonfire to celebrate the news.

2 Francis Hutcheson, An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue, London, 1725.

3 Francis Hutcheson, An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections, With Illustrations on the Moral Sense, London, 1728.

4 James Coutts, A History of the University of Glasgow, Glasgow, 1909, p.218. Hutcheson was nominated on 19 December 1729 and admitted 3 November 1730. Excerpts from Senatus et Facultatis Artium Acta Recentiora, Glasgow, 1858, p.315.

5 W.R. Scott, Francis Hutcheson, Cambridge, 1900, p.257.

Leechman emphasized Hutcheson's position in the history of ideas when he stated of him that he regarded the function of his office as being to dwell,

> upon such moral considerations as are suited to touch the heart, and excite a relish for virtue ... He regarded the culture of the heart as the main end of all moral instruction.[1]

The teaching of Hutcheson's predecessor, Gerschom Carmichael, had concentrated on Grotius, Pufendorf, Descartes and Locke and had concerned itself with the fundamentals of the laws of nature.[2] Hutcheson, although he began at Glasgow by teaching Pufendorf and the 'Compend of Gersham Carmichael'[3] gradually evolved his own system of lectures, published posthumously as A System of Moral Philosophy (1755). In addition, he conducted his lectures in English in contrast to the traditional practice of lecturing in Latin (although both Wodrow and Simson had used English to a limited extent).[4]

> Hutcheson lectured, to appearance, extempore, walked up and down in his class-room, and spoke with an animation of countenance, voice, and gesture, which instantly went to the heart.[5]

The most significant aspect of Hutcheson's philosophical

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1 Francis Hutcheson, A System of Moral Philosophy, London, 1755, i, xxxi. The statement quoted occurs in Leechman's 'Account of the Life, Writings, and Character of the Author' (dated 24 December 1754) prefixed to the two-volume work published in 1755 by Hutcheson's son, Francis Hutcheson M.D.

2 Charles Morthland confirmed that 'Puffendrof de Officio hominis & Civis, or Grotus de jure botti & pacis' were taught by the Professor of Philosophy at Edinburgh. [Charles Morthland]. An Account of the Government of the Church of Scotland, London, 1708, p.22.

3 Robert Wodrow, Analecta, iv, 185.

4 The Commission set up in 1726-7 to investigate the organization of the University of Glasgow produced its 'Act regulating the University of Glasgow' in 1727.

5 William Leechman, Sermons ed. James Wodrow, London, 1789, i, 28.

credo was his belief in a morality accessible to and attainable by all. Although his ideas were founded in Shaftesbury's philosophy, he extended the scope of his philosophical beliefs to include the concept of universal aspiration to virtue.[1] In his attempt to prove the existence of an innate moral sense, Hutcheson classified the senses and defined what he termed 'desires'. He distinguished between the 'selfish desires' and the 'publick, or benevolent desires':

> The Desires in which one intends or pursues what he apprehends advantageous to himself, we may call SELFISH; and those in which we pursue what we apprehend advantageous to others, and do not apprehend advantageous to our selves, or do not pursue with this view, we may call Publick or BENEVOLENT Desires.[2]

The pursuit of goodness through the expression of the 'benevolent desires' reinforced the idea that achieving the moral life was something within the grasp of all men. From being a single aspect of individual moral behaviour, benevolence was soon, however, to be equated with personal happiness, since the pursuit and achievement of personal happiness lay in cultivating an altruistic and 'benevolent' attitude to mankind.

> The virtuous Benevolence must be an ultimate Desire, which would subsist without view to private Good.[3]

Curiously enough the term 'benevolence', although it is the lynch-pin of so many 18th-century Scottish attitudes, is never adequately or consistently defined in Hutcheson's

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1 Shaftesbury's theory of virtue began from the premise that the cultivated man possessed natural advantages in the pursuit of virtue. Early editions of Hutcheson's Inquiry contain references that suggest limitations on the 'new morality' but these references are expunged in later editions. T.R. Scott, Francis Hutcheson, p.186.

2 Francis Hutcheson, An Essay on the Passions, p.13.

3 Ibid., p.21.

work. In the Inquiry he stated his belief in a 'universal calm benevolence' and he defined benevolence as 'the natural Affection of Benevolence ... strengthen'd by Esteem, Gratitude, Compassion, or other kind Affections; or on the contrary weaken'd by Displicence, Anger, or Envy'.[1] The nearest approach to a definition offered by Hutcheson is to be found in the Essay on the Passions:

> May not our Benevolence be at least a Desire for the Happiness of others, as the Means of obtaining the Pleasures of the publick Sense, from the Contemplation of their Happiness?[2]

No concrete definition of what the term benevolence involved is provided, however, and this imprecision in definition left the way open for later improvisations on what the term could be taken to imply.

Precise definitions aside, however, Hutcheson did suggest that a distinction between a moral action and an immoral action could be made on the basis of the presence or absence of benevolence in the act. This distinction led to the subsequent identification of the 'moral' man with the 'benevolent' man, since Hutcheson had stated in the Essay on the Passions -

> An Action is good, in a Moral Sense, when it flows from benevolent Affection, or Intention of absolute Good to others ... An Action is morally evil, either from Intention of absolute Evil, universal, or particular ... or from pursuit of private or particular relative Good, which they might have known did tend to universal absolute Evil. For even the want of a

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1 Francis Hutcheson, An Inquiry, p.149. Hutcheson argued the existence in every man of 'a universal Determination to Benevolence in Mankind, even toward the most distant parts of the Species'. Inquiry, p.195.

2 Francis Hutcheson, Essay on the Passions, p.21.

just Degree of Benevolence renders an Action evil.[1]

The gradual equation of morality with benevolence led to an importance being attached to qualities and situations which could be seen to demonstrate benevolence. If it was to succeed in its aim, benevolence had to be easily recognizable. In the novel, this requirement was satisfied by concentrating on providing stock features and standard situations which demonstrated benevolence. In the sermon, benevolence was expressed in fairly standard terms, too. The importance of the pulpit in circulating the new doctrine of benevolence is indicated by Elizabeth Mure's comment on the new climate in Scottish pulpit rhetoric:

> I may justly mention Ministers as teachers. Professor Hamilton & the two Mr Wisherts at Edin, Professor Hutcheson, Craig, Clark & Principal Lishman in the west, these taught, that whoever would please God must resemble him in goodness & benevolence, & those that had it not must affect it by politeness & good manners.[2]

From the time of his appointment at Glasgow, Hutcheson's lectures formed the core of divinity training at the University, since the heretical implications of the work of the then holder of the Chair, John Simson, had caused him to be removed from his position.[3] Simson was suspended from his

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1 Francis Hutcheson, Essay on the Passions, p.37.

2 Elizabeth Mure, 'Some remarks on the Change of Manners in my Own Time (1700-1790)'. NLS MS.5003, f.7. In his account of Leechman, Wodrow related that Leechman had cultivated friendships with Clark of Neilston, Craig of Glasgow, Fleming of Kilmacolm and Warner of Kilbarchan, when he was tutor to Mure of Caldwell. William Leechman, Sermons. To which is prefixed an account of the author's life by James Wodrow, London, 1789,i,9.

3 John Simson (1688-1740) studied at Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Leiden. He was appointed Professor of Divinity at Glasgow in 1708 but was later accused of teaching heresy and suspended from all ecclesiastical duties in 1729.

Chair but he was not expelled and, in consequence, the Chair of Divinity was virtually in abeyance until 1740, the year of Simson's death, when Michael Potter[1] was appointed at the age of seventy.[2] In the meantime, Hutcheson lectured on 'natural theology, ethics, jurisprudence, and Christian evidences'. Furthermore, he possessed certain advantages over Simson or indeed any other Professor of Divinity, since although he was required to subscribe to the Confession of Faith, he held the Chair of Moral Philosophy and was, therefore, ostensibly free to be as heretical as he chose. By arrangement with Alexander Dunlop,[3] Hutcheson delivered three lectures a week on the ethics of the Ancients. These lectures helped to foster the study of Greek but they also gave Hutcheson an opportunity to stress Shaftesbury's views on the intrinsic excellence of the moral system of the Ancients. He took a particular interest in the students of divinity, even going so far as to assist them with the preparation of their sermons.[4] The impact of Hutcheson's thought even on those of a strictly Evangelical disposition can be deduced from the remarks of the anonymous author of the pamphlet A Letter to Francis Hutcheson (1738). In his

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1 Michael Potter (1670-1743), minister of Kippen from 1700 to 1740 and appointed Professor of Divinity at Glasgow amid protest. FES, vii, 400.

2 The unrest occasioned by the Simson controversy had a detrimental effect on divinity classes at Glasgow, since many students transferred to Edinburgh during Simson's long suspension. H.M.B. Reid, The Divinity Professors in the University of Glasgow, Glasgow, 1923, p.241.

3 Alexander Dunlop (1684-1747) was appointed Professor of Greek at Glasgow in 1706 and remained there until he resigned owing to ill-health in 1742. DNB, xvi, 203.

4 W.R. Scott, Francis Hutcheson, Cambridge, 1900, p.84.

pamphlet, he described in satirical vein how he had attended Hutcheson's lectures for two sessions and had heard him lecture on Natural Theology and Moral Philosophy:

> I was in Danger of falling in with the most Part of it, finding it exceedingly agreeable to the Dictates of corrupt Reason; my Fancy was tickled with your chimerical Ideas of Virtue and a Moral Sense, and depraved Nature was not a little pleased to hear of a God, altogether such a one as ourselves. Thus I was almost carried down the Stream, and my Feet had well nigh slipt.[1]

The existence of a change of climate within student opinion in regard to the traditional religious principles inherited from the late 17th century can also be seen early in the 1720s in the trend for students to set up clubs, or forums, in which to discuss and examine ideas.[2] Student enterprise in setting up debating clubs of this kind was strongly vetoed by John Simson and Gerschom Carmichael, both of whom were concerned about the outcome of too much questioning.[3] The Faculty at Glasgow was convened in 1720, ostensibly to discuss an Act to suppress vice within the University but, in practice, to attempt to abolish student clubs under the guise of 'An Act to Suppress Immorality'.[4]

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1 Shaftesbury's Ghost conjur'd: or, A letter to Mr. Francis Hutcheson, [Glasgow?], 1738, p.4. The pamphlet is signed 'Euzelus Philalethes'.

2 H.M.B. Reid notes the existence of what were essentially praying societies at Glasgow under James Wodrow, Professor of Divinity (1692-1707) and he suggests that these were responsible for inaugurating the 18th-century formal debating society. H.M.B. Reid, The Divinity Professors in the University of Glasgow, Glasgow, 1923, p.188.

3 Gerschom Carmichael's concentration on the older methods of teaching may possibly help to explain his resistance to the innovation of the debating club.

4 D.D. McElroy, A Century of Scottish Clubs 1700-1800, (unpublished Ph.D. thesis), Edinburgh, 1969, pp.218-26.

Despite some desultory discussion of these proposals by the Faculty from time to time, they were finally rejected and no action was taken. It is significant that James Arbuckle, a student at Glasgow and believed to be the author of an account of the University's campaign against student clubs[1], moved back to Dublin after graduating in 1720 and spent much time in the circle of Lord Molesworth from whom he absorbed much of Shaftesbury's thought.

It is interesting to observe that Francis Hutcheson, also a member of that circle but, on his arrival in Glasgow, only too aware of the novelty of his thought, 'declined to go to clubs'.[2] In his Analecta, Wodrow expressed the fears of many of his contemporaries about the potential dangers of the sort of free exchange of ideas that clubs encouraged. In a reference to the setting up of the Triumpherian Club, he commented:

> The Clubs are like to have very ill influence on Religion. People meet in them without any solid grave person to moderat, and give a loose to their fancy and enquirys, with [out] any stated rule of them or any solid principles. They declaim against reading, and cry up thinking.[3]

But clubs continued to exist on a smaller scale than those of the major societies of the post-1750 period but, nevertheless, similar in function in that they acted as catalysts

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1 James Arbuckle, Prologue and Epilogue to Tamerlane Acted in the Grammar School in Glasgow, December 30, 1720. A short Account of the late Treatment of students of the University of G---, Dublin, 1722.

2 Robert Wodrow, Analecta, iv,190.

3 Ibid., iii,183. The 'Triumpherian Club' was sometimes spelt 'Trinampherian'. Wodrow also mentions the existence of the Eleutherian Club and the Anticapadocian Club, both student clubs.

for the airing of new ideas and the questioning of old ones. In 1726, Wodrow spoke chidingly of a group of students at Ayr who met fortnightly to discuss topics of current interest, among them, their strong opposition to all Confessions of Faith and subscriptions.[1]

The concern with purity of doctrine in early 18th-century Scotland must have lent weight to the suspicion that a connexion existed between the free interplay of ideas fostered by student clubs and a further gaining of ground by the Deists. With the gradual decline in the clamour about heresy, however, opposition to clubs not merely diminished but from mid-century, the setting up of clubs was actively encouraged. In his Life of James Beattie, William Forbes recorded that such a club was set up in Aberdeen in 1742:

> So far back as the year 1742, a similar society had been formed there [ie. in Aberdeen], consisting of young men, who were students of divinity at those two universities of New and Old Aberdeen, in which the pleasures of conversation were combined with the pursuits of sacred literature.[2]

Alexander Carlyle also related how when he was studying at Glasgow during the period 1743 to 1745, he was a member of two clubs, one entirely literary and comprised of divinity students, the other literary but including as members a good sprinkling of non-clerics. The most common topics discussed at the latter club were these:

> We criticised books and wrote abridgements of them, with critical essays; and to this society we submitted the discourses which we were to deliver in the Divinity Hall in our turns, when we were appointed by the professor.[3]

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1 Robert Wodrow, Analecta, iii,337.

2 Sir William Forbes, An Account of the Life and Writings of James Beattie, Edinburgh, 1806,i,32.

3 Alexander Carlyle, Autobiography, Edinburgh, 1860, p.76.

The opportunity that clubs conferred for rehearsing the sermons that were later to be presented to the Professor of Divinity for critical assessment helped to foster concern both about the design and the mode of delivery of sermons. For this reason, the advantages proffered by membership of debating clubs were very clear to 'improving' students of divinity like Carlyle. He relates in his Autobiography how while he was at Glasgow, the literary club to which he belonged set itself to reviewing books as 'a proper exercise'. Carlyle was assigned Hutcheson's On the Passions and the review he produced was subsequently shown to Hutcheson at the suggestion of William Thom, later the Evangelical minister of Govan.

As well as student members, some of the Glasgow clubs also attracted licensed ministers to their discussions. There was, of course, a strong suspicion of the motive of clubs in Evangelical quarters of the Church, in contrast to the high reputation they enjoyed among 'improvers'. The transfer of the discussion of theological and ethical questions from the academic precincts into Glasgow taverns was quite unacceptable to Evangelical minds and, so, the criticism that the clubs encouraged behaviour inconsistent with the dignity of the clerical profession was a constant and ready gibe.[1] The fact remains, however, that the spirit of liberal inquiry had made sufficient inroads in Scotland

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1 John Hyndman used this argument when he attempted to persuade the Rev. Robert Paton of Renfrew to forbid his nephew to visit the second of Carlyle's clubs held in 'Mr Dugald's tavern near the Cross'. Alexander Carlyle, Autobiography, p.77.

by the 1740s to allow clubs to exist without much interference.[1]

The speed with which this change of attitude took place was matched by a similar acceleration in advocating new modes of sermon rhetoric. Describing the advance of the 'moral' sermon, Elizabeth Mure commented that the taste for good morals:

> was improved by a sett of teachers among us, most whom had their education abroad or had traveled with young Gentlemen ... Professor Hamilton and the two Mr Wisherts at Edinburgh: Professor Hutcheson; Craig, Clark, and Principal Leechman in the west.[2]

Much of the credit for the new injection of life into divinity training must go to William Leechman who was appointed Professor of Divinity at Glasgow in 1742. Leechman had studied under William Hamilton, a friend of Simson's who was a firm adherent of the new code of 'judicious silence' on delicate theological issues.[3] Later, Leechman attended the popular classes held by Hutcheson at Glasgow during the time when he was employed as tutor to William Mure of Caldwell.[4] In Mure and Hutcheson, both of whom had earmarked him for the Chair of Divinity at Glasgow, Leechman had two powerful allies. Writing to Mure commissioning a letter of

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1 Carlyle comments of the function of the clubs: 'These societies contributed much to our improvement; and as moderation and early hours were inviolable rules of both institutions, they served to open and enlarge our minds'. Alexander Carlyle, Autobiography, p.78. Cf. Hugh Blair's more cautious opinion on the usefulness of clubs. Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, ii,241.

2 Leechman acted as tutor to William Mure of Caldwell, friend of David Hume.

3 In 1728, Wodrow mentions that Hamilton is 'beginning to be much suspected by his favouring Mr Simson'. Robert Wodrow, Analecta, iii,485.

4 H.M.B. Reid, The Divinity Professors in the University of Glasgow, Glasgow, 1923, p.245.

recommendation for Leechman from the Duke of Montrose (on the death of the incumbent of the Chair of Divinity at Glasgow, Michael Potter of Kippen), Hutcheson remarked:

> You may represent, what is abundantly known, that he is universally approved for literature and eloquence, and that Anderson, his chief opposer, made himself ridiculous to all men of sense by dangling after Whitefield and McCullogh.[1]

Leechman's innovations in the Chair of Divinity were two-fold. Firstly, he continued Hutcheson's practice of lecturing rather than dictating his lectures to students; and, secondly, he instituted a course of lectures on the composition of sermons.[2] James Wodrow, author of an account of Leechman's life, attended his lectures from 1747 to 1753 and he gives a comprehensive account of Leechman's system of instruction.[3]

Monday	New Testament
Tuesday	Polemical Divinity, using Pictet's
Thursday	Shorter System, afterwards replaced
Friday	by Osterwald.
Wednesday	(on a two-year rota):
	1. Lectures on evidences of Christianity
	2. Lectures on composition.

Leechman gave an hour-long lecture on four days each week during the six-month session, and he also spent an hour on Fridays (and sometimes on Saturdays) hearing prescribed

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1 Selections from the Family Papers preserved at Caldwell, Maitland Club, Glasgow, 1854, Part II, vol.i, p.54.

2 H.M.B. Reid, The Divinity Professors in the University of Glasgow, pp.254-5.

3 William Leechman, Sermons. To which is prefixed, Some Account of the author's life, by James Wodrow, London, 1789, i, 28-66.

discourses from students and offering constructive criticism.

The two principal sources of information about the content of Leechman's lectures on composition are the printed account of the lectures prefixed by James Wodrow to his edition of Leechman's Sermons, and a set of Leechman's lectures (c.1770) extant in manuscript in Edinburgh University Library.[1] Leechman introduced his series of lectures by a preliminary discussion of the definition and divisions of classical oratory and how they related to pulpit oratory. At the outset, he raised the question of whether oratory fulfilled a legitimate function in the dissemination of religious knowledge:

> It is questioned by some whether this at all should be studied as an art or Science since it may mislead us by insinuating wrong notions on Doctrines, & consequently leads to wrong Practice and thus become a Source the most hurtful to Society. Persons of a very high Character in the world for Learning have spoke in this Way & no less a Philosopher than Plato expelled orators from that plan of a Republick which he thought best and most excellent least [sic] they Should soften & enervate his people.[2]

Leechman rejected the view that oratory could be in conflict with the aims of religious instruction: he argued that it would be necessary to demonstrate that the 'hurt' produced by oratory would be greater than the damaging consequences that would undoubtedly ensue from its neglect.

The main course of Leechman's instruction on sermon composition was arranged under three sub-headings.

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1 'Lectures on Composition by the Reverend Mr. Leechman, Professor of Divinity in the University of Glasgow', EUL MS.Dc.7.86.

2 Ibid., f.14.

1. Analysis of the components of the pulpit discourse.
2. The 'circumstantial' elements of the discourse, i.e. dress, ornaments, language and composition.
3. The complexion and temper of mind required for pulpit delivery of a persuasive or improving intent.[1]

In listing the essential components of the pulpit discourse, Leechman dealt first with the introduction or exordium, quoting Cicero's definition of the exordium as a 'speech designed to prepare the hearers for what shall be said'. The criteria he established for the successful exordium were these:

1. The exordium should be clear.
2. It should be plain and simple, without the appearance of any artistry or design.
3. The speaker should be calm, composed and without emotion.
4. The exordium should begin moderately as a means of gaining the esteem and confidence of the audience.
5. The exordium should not anticipate what was to be said in the succeeding parts of the discourse. (Leechman based his comments here on Cicero's De Inventione.)

After having dealt with the exordium, Leechman divided the discourse itself into three parts.

1. The explication, or method of informing the audience about the subject.
2. The argumentative part of the discourse, or the con-

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1 William Leechman, Sermons, London, 1789, i, 49-50.

vincing of the judgement.

3. The moving of the passions or affections.[1]

In the explication, Leechman separated sermon topics into simple and complex categories: a simple subject was one that required no explanation while a complex one required to be defined or described. In his discussion of rational conviction, Leechman made a clear distinction between the arguments appropriate to convincing the judgement and those appropriate to moving the passions. Leechman defined conviction as the placing before the mind of such arguments as would exhort the assent of the audience: persuasion as a method of employing all honest means to render the subject agreeable to the hearers. He stressed the rôle of persuasive oratory as one of primary importance in presenting moral and religious subjects, and he laid particular emphasis on the persuasive machinery of good oratory.

> An agreeable voice; a proper pronunciation and gesture ... by discovering a tender concern for their best interests; by avoiding any strokes of raillery, any pride or contempt of their opinions; ... by making proper allowances for their prejudices, and by entering into them with a kind of sympathy.[2]

Leechman followed on from his discussion of the explication by dealing with the persuasive element in the sermon. In the manuscript account of Leechman's lectures, the act of 'moving the passions' is defined as being 'to work strongly upon them, and so to awaken them as to set Men to Action, to

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1 William Leechman, Sermons, i, 52.

2 Ibid., 55-6.

lead them out to Conduct'.[1] In his account, James Wodrow expanded Leechman's definition to the following:

> raising in the mind a calm esteem of any virtue, branch of science, or other valuable accomplishment; or, in a stricter sense, in raising the passions of love, gratitude, joy, grief, hope, fear, pity, indignation, hatred, and thus bringing the principles or springs of human action into immediate exercise.[2]

Leechman stressed that a knowledge of 'the human heart' was essential to successfully move the passions and, to further this end, he recommended Aristotle's Ars Rhetorica and 'particularly the 2d part of it & all that w^e^ is called The Topicks of Invention'. The rules he advocated for raising the passions were four-fold:

> 1. The sermon-writer must decide if the subject of the sermon admitted to any passion and, if so, of what sort.
> 2. The passion must be raised in proportion to the sort of passions the speaker wished to arouse.
> 3. A distinction must be made between 'painting to the imagination' and 'moving the heart'. The use of a 'warm imagination' could arouse strong feelings but there might be marked dangers in the unrestrained use of over-elaborate imagery.
> 4. The writer should avoid everything of an extraneous nature.[3]

Leechman's influence on the development of sermon design and style can be seen both in his innovations and in his extension and application of earlier practice. As an innovator, his system of lectures (although based in the main on

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1 EUL MS. Dc.8.76,f.136. The passions were those of love, gratitude, joy, grief, hope, fear, pity, indignation and hatred.

2 William Leechman, Sermons, i.56.

3 EUL MS. Dc.8.76,f.140.

Hutcheson's ideas) offered the first structured instruction in the preparation of sermons, and provided practical guidelines for sermon-writers as well as teaching the methodology of sermon-writing. His suggestions or criticisms were complemented by practical examples from his own sermons; and he also directed students on how they should prepare for sermon-writing (i.e. by studying the Bible, the best books of the ancient moralists and by having a knowledge of logic and a knowledge of the human heart.) He confirmed his belief in the Horatian ideal that an orator should himself be moved before he could, in turn, successfully arouse the emotions of his audience, and he represented the raising of religious feelings in an audience as the most agreeable - but also the most difficult and delicate - part of the preacher's task. Leechman's belief that sensibility of mind and a sensitive approach to human problems were essential components of good oratory and primary weapons in the conversion of men to the moral life, was both to influence later sermon-writing and to find an echo in the field of literary endeavour. Phrases such as 'moving the passions' and 'knowledge of the human heart' became the catchwords of literary criticism in the second half of the 18th century in Scotland. The conviction that pulpit rhetoric should move from its traditionally authoritarian stance to a position where feeling was recognized and where good preachers should 'form themselves to a certain sensibility of heart'[1] was to have far-reaching

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1 William Leechman, Sermons, i,64. The components of sensibility to Leechman were: 'a diligent perusal of the works of such writers as had the greatest power over the human mind - Frequent contemplation on such objects as were great and interesting in their own nature - The avoiding of every thing unfavourable to this sensibility particularly ... metaphysical disputes in philosophy, and to party disputes in religion. A strong sense of what is fit, decent, or becoming. An unfeigned and hearty desire of doing good'. Ibid., 64-5.

consequences.

Leechman also stressed that sermons should be adapted to the capacity of the audience to which they were addressed, and he emphasized the need to avoid the absurdity of adopting a 'learned and philosophical style before a common audience'. He argued resolutely against the inclusion in sermons of usages adopted from foreign languages and the classics, and he advocated the use of a plain English vocabulary.

> This is a kind of Excellency in Language upon w^c^ Doctor Swift valued himself & in w^c^ he has succeeded. In his Letter to Young Clergymen w^c^ is well worth the reading, he advises him to use no words but what the Meanest might Understand ... if this is at all a Rule for Language it is particularly fit for Sermons and especially such as are spoke to the lowest for such discourses are intended to instruct & impress these and this can never be done if they are not understood.[1]

The analysis of the components of the discourse comprised two-thirds of Leechman's lectures; the remainder he devoted to an examination of sermon style and delivery. In framing the rules for a correct style, Leechman recommended:

1. Close attention to detail.
2. Close adherence to realism, i.e. 'to describe and paint things just as they are in themselves'.
3. To avoid giving way to florid imagination or a desire for applause.
4. Frequent practice in composing sermons.
5. To follow original genius, rather than to borrow or transcribe from the writings of others.[2]

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1 'Lectures on Composition'. EUL MS. Dc.7.86, ff.184-5.

2 'Here the pleasure of being originals was strongly inculculated, as well as the utility of it'. William Leechman, Sermons, i,63.

6. To follow one's own style in a natural way.

7. To accommodate one's style to the capacity of the audience.

8. To accommodate one's style to different subjects.[1]

The final topic dealt with in Leechman's lectures was the complexion or temper of mind in which sermons should be composed and delivered. Leechman recommended to his students that they should cultivate a 'sensibility of heart' which he defined as a 'readiness to be touched by the human passions'.[2] Sensibility of heart could be fostered in the following ways:

1. A constant effort to attain sensibility of heart.

2. A strong sense of what was fit, decent or becoming.

3. A desire for doing good by communicating important information or instruction to the hearers.

4. The avoidance of the opposite extremes of credulity and scepticism.

5. The authority acquired by blamelessness of conduct.

Leechman's decision to institute a course to teach sermon composition suggests the existence of the first signs of 18th-century Scottish acceptance that pulpit oratory was a skill that could be taught and not merely an art conferred by divine inspiration. It also indicates a growing belief that men could be taught to preach, by arranging formal courses on sermon composition at universities.

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1 William Leechman, Sermons, i,62-4.

2 'Lectures on Composition'. EUL MS. Dc.7.86, f.151.

The audience at which the new ideas of training in sermon composition were directed, was also by this time becoming more receptive to these new ideas. Wodrow recorded in his memoirs that Leechman's lectures attracted a large attendance of students:

> Even the young men designed for the ministry among the Seceders, who are considered as the most rigid sect in Scotland, attended Dr. Leechman's lectures in considerable numbers ... Many ingenious young men from England and Ireland attended his lectures, and improved under his tuition.[1]

The optimistic teachings of Hutcheson, Hamilton and Leechman in contrast to the doctrinal pessimism of the late 17th century, created a desire for improvement in all aspects of pulpit activity. Alexander Carlyle exemplified the willingness of divinity students to learn the craft of sermon-writing when he referred to Leechman's 'admirable lectures on the Gospel proofs of Christianity, and the art of composition'.

> If there was any defect, it was in the small number of exercises prescribed to the students, for one discourse in a session was by no means sufficient to produce a habit of composition.[2]

The habit of sermon composition was also encouraged in their own sermons by men like Leechman, who were preachers as well as teachers. Carlyle recalled that Leechman,

> in aid of fine composition, he delivered his sermons with such fervent spirit, and in so persuasive a manner, as captivated every audience.[3]

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1 William Leechman, Sermons, i,70.

2 Alexander Carlyle, Autobiography, p.85.

3 Alexander Carlyle, Autobiography, p.68. Leechman's parting advice to his students was to recomment 'candour and continued diligence in the search after truth; ... advised them long to retain the character of enquirers, and to keep their minds open to new light and evidence from every quarter'. Leechman, Sermons, i,34-5.

The trend towards developing the craft of sermon-writing was continued by John Stevenson, who was appointed to the Chair of Logic and Metaphysics at Edinburgh in 1730 and continued to teach there until 1775. The teaching of rhetoric at Edinburgh was assigned to the Chair of Logic,[1] and in addition to two hours of logic, Stevenson spent another hour daily in the study of belles lettres with his students. Thomas Somerville attended Stevenson's classes in 1757, and he recorded the arrangement and content of Stevenson's lectures on belles lettres. The method he adopted was to arrange for his students to read and translate prescribed passages of Aristotle's Ars Poetica and Longinus' On the Sublime which he then, in turn, expounded to them. He also read lectures on 'the cardinal points of criticism' in which he gave instruction on the rules of composition and supplied examples and critical comment. He drew his sources from:

> Dryden, Addison's papers in the Spectator, Bossu, Dacier and Pope's notes on Homer, as greatly to delight and instruct his hearers, whom he thus initiated into those pleasing studies, which, at that period of life, were quite new to them.[2]

Stevenson also required each student to compose a discourse on a subject assigned to him and to defend a thesis before the Principal, the Professors and the public 'for their [i.e. the students'] improvement in the art of Reasoning'.[3]

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1 Rhetoric was also assigned to the Chair of Logic at Glasgow University. David Murray, Memories of the Old College of Glasgow, Glasgow, 1927, p.21.

2 'Account of the late Duke Gordon, M.A.'. Scots Magazine, lxiv(1802),21.

3 A Short Account of the University of Edinburgh, the present Professors in it, and the several parts of learning taught by them', Scots Magazine, iii(1741),373.

Since it was a requirement that candidates for the ministry should have completed the Philosophy course before enrolling for the Divinity course, all students of divinity attended Stevenson's classes. Thomas Somerville, who was a member of his class in 1757 during his second session at Edinburgh, commented of him:

> I derived more substantial benefit from these exercises and lectures than from all the public classes which I attended at the University.[1]

Stevenson's lectures seem to have been highly regarded by the majority of his students: Alexander Carlyle reiterated Somerville's favourable comments and William Robertson claimed that Stevenson's use of extracts from Longinus and Aristotle in his lectures was the most important gain he made from his studies. Hugh Blair was another of Stevenson's pupils and it is probable that the lectures exerted a substantial influence on Blair when he came to compose his own lectures.

The importance of Stevenson's contribution to the development of 18th-century Scottish rhetoric was not as an innovator but as a vehicle for conveying the new ideas of improvement in the fields of taste and composition. He broadened the scope of the lectures traditionally offered by the Chair of Logic by introducing into the syllabus Heineccius, Locke's Essay on the Understanding[3], Longinus

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1 Thomas Somerville, My Own Life and Times 1741-1814, Edinburgh, 1861, 13-14.

2 Dugald Stewart, Account of the Life and Writings of William Robertson, London, 1802 (2nd ed.), p.5.

3 Stevenson was probably responsible for introducing Locke's Essay to Edinburgh in 1741, when it first formed part of the curriculum for the Logic course.

and contemporary 18th-century critical writers. Although Stevenson may not have been an innovator, he was responsive to the new ideas and to the developing taste of the age for polite literature.

> Not satisfied, however, with explaining the principles of Logic and Metaphysics, he endeavoured, by prelections on the most esteemed classics, ancient and modern, to instil into the minds of his pupils, a relish for works of taste, and a love of elegant composition.[1]

It is interesting, by way of contrast, to note Somerville's less favourable comments on the Moral Philosophy class at Edinburgh during the same period.

> The Moral Philosophy class was ill attended ... the teacher, Mr. Balfour of Pilrig, whose lectures consisted of a sort of desultory extemporaneous illustrations of the text of Puffendorf, De Iure Civis...[2]

At the same time as Stevenson was attempting to broaden the vision of Edinburgh students, Adam Smith was delivering an annual set of public lectures on rhetoric and belles lettres in the town of Edinburgh during the period 1748 to 1751. The lectures were later absorbed into the Logic course delivered by Smith in Glasgow in 1751 and, again, in the Moral Philosophy course the following year, when Smith succeeded Thomas Craigie in the Chair of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow. Smith's Edinburgh lectures were probably delivered at the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh and they were continued after Smith's transfer to Glasgow, by Robert Watson until 1756 (when Watson moved to St Andrews)

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1 'Account of the public life and character of the late Dr Erskine, of Edinburgh', Scots Magazine, lxv(1803),76.

2 Thomas Somerville, My Own Life and Times 1741-1814, Edinburgh, 1861, p.16.

and later, in 1759, by Hugh Blair.

The only accounts of the content of Smith's lectures known to have survived until the 1960s were the account by John Millar given to and published by Dugald Stewart in his memoir of Adam Smith[1] and the description of Smith's lectures provided by James Wodrow in a letter to the Earl of Buchan.[2] In the early 1960s, however, a two-volume set of manuscript notes taken at Smith's lectures was acquired by Professor J.M. Lothian at a sale of the library of Whitehaugh (founded in the late 16th century by William Forbes of Tolquhoun).[3] The notes proved to be a student's record of the lectures delivered by Smith during the session 1762 to 1763, the last year of his term as Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow.

James Wodrow's letter to the Earl of Buchan contains a useful summary of Smith's lectures.

> 'Adam Smith delivered a set of admirable lectures on language (not as a grammarian but as a rhetorician) on the different kinds or characteristics of style suited to different subjects ... He characterised the style and the genius of some of the best of the ancient writers and poets, but especially historians, Thucydides, Polybius ... also the style of the best English classics, Lord Clarendon, Addison, Swift, Pope ... his remarks and rules given in the lectures I speak of, were the result of a fine taste and sound judgement, well calculated to be exceedingly useful to young composers.'[4]

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1 Dugald Stewart, Essays on Philosophical Subjects by the late Adam Smith ... to which is prefixed An Account of the Life and Writings of the Author, London, 1853.

2 W.R. Scott, Adam Smith as Student and Professor, Glasgow, 1937, p.51.

3 'Notes of Dr. Smith's Rhetorick Lectures', later published as Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres delivered by Adam Smith ed. J.M. Lothian, Edinburgh, 1963.

4 W.R. Scott, Adam Smith as Student and Professor, Glasgow, 1937, pp.51-2.

The first section of Smith's lectures was concerned with the development of a style of composition which was to be plain and simple. He warned against the errors of prolixity and the inappropriate use of figures of speech; he praised the styles of Addison and Swift, and he criticized that of Shaftesbury on account of its pomposity. Smith then went on to deal in turn with the three species of eloquence: demonstrative, deliberative, and judicial. He stressed that historical composition had an important function to instruct as well as to entertain, in contrast to fiction-writing, the function of which was primarily to entertain. He dealt with didactic eloquence and defined it as the laying down of a proposition and the proving of it by a number of arguments. He advised students to guard against having more than five subordinate propositions when composing a piece of writing, since the human mind could not easily comprehend numbers in excess five.

> There are more sermons and other discourses divided into this number of heads than any other ... There are, however, sermons, wrote about the time of the Civil Wars, which have not only fifteenthly or sixteenthly, but twentiethly, thirtiethly, or fortiethly.[1]

Apart from the reference given <u>supra</u>, this account of Smith's lectures contains no further references to the composition of sermons, although many of the points discussed could equally well apply to sermon-writing; his

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1 <u>Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres delivered in the University of Glasgow by Adam Smith</u> ed. J.M. Lothian, Edinburgh, 1963, pp.137-8.

energies appear to have been devoted to an examination of historical and descriptive composition and to the general rules that apply to good composition.

Smith's lectures were distinguished for the range of topic and interest that they encompassed, and for the way in which his lectures touched on and dealt not only with morality but with criticism and taste.[1] In this, Smith was part of the movement by which rhetoric ceased to be interpreted as a narrow discipline and became extended in scope to include concepts of literature, taste and literary criticism. William Richardson, in his preface to the posthumously published Discourses on Theological and Literary Subjects of Archibald Arthur, confirmed the impression Smith's lectures made on his students:

> Those who received instruction from Dr Smith, will recollect, with much satisfaction, many of those incidental and digressive illustrations, and even discussions, not only in morality, but in criticism, which were delivered by him with animated and extemporaneous eloquence.[2]

Smith's lectures were also remarkable for the emphasis in them on the classical doctrine of propriety and the application of this doctrine to style and belles lettres.[3]

Another influential figure in the shaping of rhetorical theory in the 1740s was William Wishart, the Younger

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1 Both Hugh Blair and Thomas Reid used Smith's notes when they were preparing their own lectures on rhetoric.

2 Discourses on Theological and Literary Subjects, by the late Archibald Arthur. With an account of some particulars in his life and character by William Richardson, Glasgow, 1803, pp.507-8.

3 Vincent Bevilacqua, 'Adam Smith's Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres', Studies in Scottish Literature, iii (1965-6),41-60.

(-?- -1753), minister of New Greyfriars, and later appointed Principal at Edinburgh in 1741. John Erskine recorded that Wishart had preached sermons in 1746 in which he had embodied the new concepts of sermon-writing. He had preached,

> a course of sermons in his own church, on the new birth; and I well remember in how beautiful and interesting a manner he illustrated the change made on self-love, the social principle, and other springs of action in the human heart.[1]

Wishart had been accused of heresy in two sermons that he had preached as minister of a dissenting congregation in London, but he was finally vindicated by the General Assembly and inducted to New Greyfriars in 1739. His sermons were simple both in design and in content. They avoided 'the vulgarities and technical phraseology which disfigured the sermons of the generality' and, in them, Wishart combined 'as much plainness, elegance, and useful illustration, in his discourses, as he possibly could'.[2] As Principal, Wishart took a keen interest in the progress of the divinity students at Edinburgh. When he preached his funeral sermon on William Robertson, John Erskine commented in the course of the sermon that none of Wishart's predecessors as Principal had paid much attention to the progress of students, but that Wishart had made a practice of attending classes and listening to and criticizing students' essays 'with the most unaffected candour'.

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1 Nathaniel Morren, Annals of the General Assembly, Edinburgh, 1838-40, i, 314.

2 Alexander Bower, The History of the University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, 1817, ii, 316.

Wishart's interest in oratory and its relevance to the pulpit may have been encouraged by his long-standing friendship with Dr John Ward of Gresham College, London, the author of a system of oratory published in 1759.[1] When Wishart arranged for Florence Wilson's Volusenus, De Animi Tranquillate to be reprinted in 1751,[2] Ward obligingly prefixed a preface to it, in which he praised Wishart's assiduity in teaching his students.[3] In his treatise on oratory, Ward defined the four cardinal qualities of the orator as wisdom, integrity, benevolence and modesty.[4] His emphasis on benevolence as a necessary component of successful oratory points forward significantly to the post-1750 esteem for benevolence both as a moral virtue and as a literary convention. Ward declared:

> The best orators have always been sensible what great influence the expressions of kindness and benevolence have upon the minds of others, to induce them to beleive [sic] the truth of what they say; and therefore they frequently endeavour to impress them with the opinion of it.[5]

Wishart's interest in composing sermons was further encouraged by his attendance (in common with so many 18th-

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1 John Ward, A System of Oratory, delivered in a course of lectures publicly read at Gresham College, London, London, 1759.

2 Florence Wilson, Volusenus, De Animi Tranquillitate, Edinburgh, 1751.

3 Ibid., preface xii.

4 John Ward, A System of Oratory, London, 1759, p.142.

5 Ibid., p.145.

century divines and literary men) at literary societies. He was a member of the Rankenian Club which, although there is some doubt about its origins, probably debated religious topics and whose membership was predominantly made up of divinity students.[1] Wodrow recorded that Leechman, too, was a member of a Glasgow literary society but omitted to give its name, although evidence of Leechman's regard for literary societies can be deduced from his introduction (while Principal) of a series of Sunday lectures on debating topics such as 'Self-knowledge, The Wisdom of Early Piety and the Excellency of the Scriptures'. These lectures were originally delivered to divinity students but they were later adapted for a more mixed audience. Wodrow remarked of these lectures:

> they were remembered and spoken of afterwards, as excellently calculated to inspire young minds with an ardour both for literary and moral improvement, and to stimulate them to strenuous exertions in this steep but pleasing path.[2]

At the same time, many of the liberal champions of the new ideas like Hamilton, Wishart and Leechman were attempting (as best they could) to steer an uneasy course between encouraging the breadth of thought and vision that they considered appropriate to a vigorous and forward-looking

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1 McElroy refers to the confusion regarding the origins of the Rankenian Club and Ruddiman's Club, and quotes Boswell's account of his conversation with Kames on the Rankenian Club: 'Their topics were chiefly Religious, and the only property they had in common was a Bible. It consisted mainly of students of Divinity. Lord Kames, Ogilvie and Campbell of Succoth went into it to puzzle and make mischief and they succeeded but too well with many making them Deists'. James Boswell, Private Papers of James Boswell, New York, 1932,xv,284.

2 William Leechman, Sermons, i,78.

Church and, at the same time, remaining within the bounds of orthodoxy. Hamilton, for example, attracted unwelcome suspicion when he championed the cause of John Simson, although he countered by attempting to divert attention from himself by officially condemning 'moral harangues'. Wodrow recorded that,

> he [Hamilton] declines to dip into hazardous points, and every year warns his scholars, in a stated discourse, against the haranging way of preaching and severall other novelties.[1]

When strong criticism of the established Church was voiced from Secession pulpits after Ebenezer Erskine's secession of 1732, Leechman continued to maintain a discreet and calculated silence.

> Mr. Leechman took little notice of these topics in the pulpit, nor of those preachers; only he let his own people know, that it would give him sincere joy, if any of them should reap more benefit and improvement from <u>their</u> instruction than from <u>his</u>.[2]

The receptive climate to 'improvement' fostered by expanding commercial prosperity and the political stability after the 1745 Rebellion, roused a desire for a revised interpretation of man's aims, along the lines indicated by the teachings of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson and further extended by teachers like Leechman and Stevenson. The transition from a stern to a generous vision of man and to the doctrines of benevolence, charity and candour began to gain acceptance, and from being a subject for dispute and debate, religion began to be seen as a binding force connecting men

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1 Robert Wodrow, <u>Analecta</u>, iii,485-6.

2 William Leechman, <u>Sermons</u>, i,16.

placed together in society.[1] The connexion between correct religious observance and social stability is stressed in a political sermon preached before the General Assembly in 1746:

> The Propensity of Men to seek after Society, in every Thing; and their Experience of Benefit from it, in all sorts of Affairs; do plainly show a natural obligation upon them to associate for Religious Purposes; and be mutually assisting to one another in these, their most important, Concerns.[2]

In 1742, William Wishart wrote a preface ('addressed to young ministers, and preachers of the Gospel; and students of divinity') to an edition of the Select Sermons of Benjamin Whichcot. Wishart commended Whichcot's sermons 'as a Mine, out of which you may dig; and a Model, by which you may improve'.[3] The preface contained Wishart's views on plagiarism in sermon-writing, and his comment that 'a studied Imitation of things ... must needs be very aukward'[4] was

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1 William Leechman, Sermons, i,70. It is interesting to note, in this respect, that 'Seceding' students also attended Leechman's lectures. The Evangelicals clung to the older vision of man as essentially base and incapable of reformation through any resource except Divine assistance.

2 A Sermon preached before the General Assembly, May 8, 1746, Edinburgh, 1746, p.7. The text was Psalm xcxxii,6-9: 'Pray that the peace of Jerusalem ....'

3 Benjamin Whichcot, Select Sermons, Edinburgh, 1742, v. Whichcot described his aim in these sermons as 'to turn men's minds away from polemical argumentation to the great moral and spiritual realities lying at the basis of all religion'. Wishart praised Whichcot for the clarity with which he 'set forth true Religion as a liberal Service animated by love', but Evangelical reaction can be assessed from John Bisset's comment in 1744: 'Whichcot's Sermons recommended by Principal Wishart; a System of Socianism ... but that Grangrene [sic] of Error is suffered to spread ... John Bisset, A Short Essay to prevent the dangerous consequences of the moral harangues now common in Scotland, Glasgow, 1746, p.35.

4 Benjamin Whichcot, Select Sermons, ix.

conspicuously less generous and flexible than the views of many of his contemporaries towards the plagiarizing of other writers' material when composing sermons. Wishart suggested that divinity students should read Whichcot's sermons in order to refine and polish their own styles, a discipline which would, Wishart believed,

> prevent your being under any such Temptation to copy closely out of his Performances, as you may be under with regard to the more finished performances of Tillotson, or others, I rather think you might find it a Task both agreeable and improving, in your private Studies, to make it an Exercise to take some Pieces of these Sermons which are full of the most excellent Thoughts; and translate them, as it were, in another sort of English; or throw them into another, or most distinct Method.[1]

Wishart's comment confirms the growing interest in the style in which religious ideas were presented, as well as the content of the ideas expressed. Adam Smith restated this emphasis in the course of his Glasgow lectures:

> And in general, in every sort of eloquence, the choice of the arguments and the proper arrangement of them is the least difficult matter. The expression and style is what requires most skill, and is alone capable of any particular directions.[2]

The Evangelical reaction to this trend was to criticize both the content of 'improving' sermons and the style in which they were presented. The secular foundation of these sermons came in for particular censure. William MacEwen, an Associate minister in Dundee, preached a sermon On the great matter and end of gospel-preaching in 1759, in which he attacked both

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1 Benjamin Whichcot, Select Sermons, viii.

2 Adam Smith, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres ed. J.M. Lothian, Edinburgh, 1963, p.142.

contemporary sermons and those who wrote them:

> Are there not many preachers who are perhaps better versed in classic authors, than in the holy Scriptures? 'Polite apostates from God's grace, to wit.' ... Some publish philosophical inquiries and moral disquisitions, and call them sermons![1]

In 1760, another important step forward was taken when Hugh Blair was appointed to the newly-founded Chair of Rhetoric at Edinburgh. He had already delivered a series of lectures on rhetoric to a public audience in 1759 but when he was finally nominated Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (at a salary of £70 per annum) in 1762, his lectures were restricted to university students. Copies of student notes (in manuscript) of Blair's lectures survive and one such copy explains Blair's procedure in presenting his lectures.[2] He distributed synopses of his lectures in manuscript in the absence of any sufficiently comprehensive printed text-book. These synopses were later printed for the use of students, probably on an annual basis. Blair continued to deliver his lectures without any major or substantial changes until 1783, when he took the decision to publish them, ostensibly because imperfect copies of the lectures were being circulated in public.[3]

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1 William McEwen, The great matter and end of gospel-preaching, Aberdeen, 1759, p.21.

2 'Hugh Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric', transcribed by John Bruce, 1765. EUL MS.Dc.10.6, f.13. Two further MSS. in EUL contain notes on Vol.II of the Lectures; and Dc.3.42., an undated manuscript, contains notes on Vol.II of the Lectures. A further copy of notes is NLS MS.850.

3 John Hill, An Account of the Life and Writings of Hugh Blair, Edinburgh, 1807, p.43.

Robert Heron, who was Blair's assistant minister for a short time, assessed his achievement in these words:

> I know not that any Professor of Rhetoric and Criticism ever contributed more to the Reformation of Taste in a Nation than Dr. Blair has done ... under him has a School of Taste and Eloquence been formed, which has diffused a skill in elegant composition and Taste to relish it, through all Scotland.[1]

As part of his syllabus, Blair included a lecture on the eloquence of the pulpit and a further lecture on the means of improving that eloquence. In his dual rôle as teacher of rhetoric and preacher, Blair's observations on pulpit eloquence are of considerable significance. For example, he saw no incompatibility between the function of the preacher and the desire to develop rhetorical skills:

> True Eloquence is the art of placing truth in the most advantageous light for conviction and persuasion. This is what every good man who preaches the Gospel not only may, but ought to have at heart.[2]

In 1777, when Blair published the first volume of his Sermons, the Critical Review in its review defined the four criteria of a good sermon: just sentiments; proper order of sentiments; elegance of style; and novelty.[3] It is interesting to note that all these criteria are laid down by Blair when he discusses the eloquence of the pulpit.

Blair's lectures on pulpit eloquence derive their principal importance from the fact that they represented the

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1 Observations made in a journey through the Western Counties of Scotland; in the autumn of 1792, Perth, 1793, ii, 495-6.

2 Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, ii, 104.

3 Critical Review, xliv (1777), 100-101.

first lectures to lay particular stress on the part that the sensibilities and the emotions had to play in the design of the successful persuasive oration. They also equated the concept of taste with a central code of goodness. Blair openly admired the French 'onction' and regarded language as secondary in importance to sentiment in effective oratory:

> The great secret lies, in bringing home all that is spoken to the hearts of the Hearers, so as to make every man think that the Preacher is addressing him in particular.[1]

To Blair, the principal aim of preaching was a moral one[2] and he restated and confirmed the Horatian ideal that a man must be a good man to be a good preacher. He was sympathetic to Adam Smith's views on the simplicity of style and he warned repeatedly against over-elaboration and the excessive use of epithets and other figures of speech.[3] He was opposed to the reading of sermons from the pulpit, a trend which he believed had contributed to the poor level of contemporary rhetoric. In this respect, however, Blair was advancing a view which found little favour in mid century and even less later in the century, when sermon-reading had become generally accepted practice among preachers.

Blair rejected the sermons of the rationalist divines as logical, dry and lacking in feeling and emotion. He

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1 Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres, ii,112. See also: 'Correct language, and elegant description, are but the secondary instruments of preaching in an interesting manner'. Ibid., ii,112.

2 Ibid., ii,105.

3 Blair had attended Adam Smith's lectures and adopted Smith's ideas on simplicity of style into his own lectures. He described in the Lectures (i,381n) how Smith had shown him his manuscript many years earlier.

criticized Clarke's style because:

> he treats man as if he were a being of pure intellect, without imagination or passions.[1]

On the other hand, he praised the style of Francis Atterbury and devoted a lecture to an analysis of one of Atterbury's sermons.[2] Blair continued his lectures by dealing with the arrangement of the sermon into the exordium, narration and explication, the argumentative part, the pathetic part and the peroration. He concurred with the views of Cicero and Quintilian on the function of the exordium: its purpose was to create responsiveness in the audience, to arouse their interest and to render them open to persuasion. Blair pointed out, however, that it might be desirable to have a very short introduction in a sermon to avoid tedium.

Blair retained the division of the sermon into heads or topics in order to provide a framework or point of reference for the preacher, although he acknowledged contemporary reaction (such as Fénelon's Dialogues) against it. He recommended, however, that the number of heads should be kept to the minimum (three to five with a maximum of six). The primary aim should be to prevent the sermon from becoming lifeless. He skimmed over the narrative and argumentative parts of the discourse and concentrated his attention on the 'pathetic' part of the sermon:

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1 Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, ii,123.

2 The sermon was on the text Psalm i.14: 'Offer unto God Thanksgiving'.

> in which, if any where, Eloquence reigns, and exerts its power.[1]

Blair rejected Aristotle's investigation of the nature of the passions and offered his own guide-lines to the use of the pathetic. In the first place, the preacher had to decide whether the topic admitted of the pathetic; the listener or the reader should not be given advance notice that the use of the pathetic was to be employed; and the hearer and the preacher himself had to be moved by the emotion:

> The foundation ... of all successful execution in the way of Pathetic Oratory is, to paint the object of that passion which we wish to raise, in the most natural and striking manner.[2]

In his lecture on the means of improving eloquence, Blair defined the qualities necessary for the preacher:

> He who is to speak from the Pulpit, must apply himself closely to the study of divinity, of practical religion, of morals, of human nature; that he may be rich in all the topics, both of instruction and of persuasion.[3]

The models recommended by Blair were those of the French school: Saurin, Bourdaloue, Fléchier, Massilon and, in particular, Bossuet, whom Blair regarded as the most 'nervous and sublime' of all preachers. Among writers on the theory of rhetoric, Blair recommended Fénelon (particularly the Dialogues on Eloquence) and he cautiously admitted the works of Rollin, Batteux, Crevier and Gibert[4], but he

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1 Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, ii,189.

2 Ibid., ii,192.

3 Ibid., ii,233.

4 Charles Rollin, Traité des Etudes (trans. London, 1734), Paris,1726-31; Charles Batteux, Traité de la Construction, Paris, 1763; Jean Baptiste Crevier, Rhétorique Française, Paris, 1765; Balthazar Gibert, De la Veritable Eloquence, Paris, 1704.

turned ultimately to the Ancients - Cicero and Quintilian.[1]

Blair's lectures on rhetoric offered contemporary society a number of comprehensible guide-lines on how to write and to speak well. The title of 'rhetoric' was loosely applied and Blair included under that heading the concepts of taste, composition, style and language. A new language of ideas relating to feeling, benevolence, passion, sublimity and taste was coming into prominence and being developed into a code of practice for society. By applying standards of good sense to rhetoric and criticism, it was believed that they could become effective aids to establishing a civilized society. If these standards could be successfully applied to rhetoric, pulpit oratory could be raised from its previously debased status to acting as one of the hallmarks of the civilized society. Blair stressed that rhetoric could be improved by study and practice, and that the provision of correct rules could assist and direct true eloquence. He emphasized that the tenor of the age made improvement in standards of rhetoric essential:

> It is an age wherein improvements, in every part of science, have been prosecuted with ardour ... The public ear is become refined. It will not easily bear what is slovenly and incorrect.[2]

Blair saw a connexion between improvement in rhetoric and the achievement of the polite society; and between

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1 It is interesting to compare Blair's printed recommendations with those to his students in the Rhetoric class, to whom he recommended Quintilian and Cicero's works (particularly De Oratore), Rollin's work on Belles-Lettres and Kames's Elements of Criticism. EUL MS.Dc.10.6,f.13.

2 Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, i,7.

sensibility and good taste and the attainment of moral excellence. No man could be eloquent who was not virtuous. The popularity of Blair's printed Lectures can be seen in the large number of editions printed both in Britain and abroad.[1] The Lectures were first published in America in 1784 and, along with those of Lord Kames, formed a standard part of all rhetoric courses in America up to 1820.[2] A manuscript account of a series of lectures on rhetoric, dated 15 November 1787 and preserved in the National Library of Scotland, commended Blair's Lectures in eulogistic terms.

> There is no Single book on this Subject which I would recommend more strongly than Dr Blair's Lectures, a book which will long be admired.[3]

This manuscript account is of interest in that it restates many of Blair's ideas on pulpit eloquence. On the purpose of pulpit eloquence (cf. Blair's Lectures, ii, 192), the lectures recommend:

> The first requisite in Pulpit Eloquence is that the speaker be animated with a proper sense of his object, which is to raise a mean degenerate world from mean and vicious pursuits, to more worthy objects.[4]

The most useful method of preaching is defined as that where the object is persuasion and where it:

> leads to the improvement of the Moral Character, which is the great end of Preaching as it is of all religion.[5]

The recommended source-works are those of Blair and Kames and stress is laid on elegance of language and style in

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1 See R.M. Schmitz, Hugh Blair, New York, 1948, p.144.

2 Andrew Hook, Scotland and America, A Study of Cultural Relations 1750-1835, Glasgow/London, 1975, p.75.

3 'Rhetorick - 15th November 1787'. NLS MS.9974, f.3.

4 Ibid., f.42.

5 Ibid., ff.430-1.

pulpit eloquence:

> Elegance of Language consists of Using the Idiom of Polite Company and rejecting that of the Vulgar ... Elegance of Stile consists then in using the Polite Idiom of the Language, in Delicacy, in conveying Agreeable Ideas, and in Fluency.[1]

It seems, therefore, that by the 1780s rhetorical treatises were offering practical and reasonably precise guide-lines on how to write and to speak well, and that the public, eager for improvement, expected them to fulfil this function. The public desire for improvement expressed itself in a number of ways. As early as 1737, John Warden had published a collection of extracts from the Spectator, the Tatler and the Guardian, and claimed to follow Rollin's method of studying the belles lettres.[2] By 1761 public lectures on rhetoric and the 'art of reading and speaking' had become popular. In that year Thomas Sheridan gave a series of lectures which he then repeated in 1764. By 1776, when interest in the subject had reached its height, lectures on elocution were being delivered in Edinburgh by numerous lecturers, including William Perry and Courtney Melmoth.[3]

It was, however, this very improvement in rhetorical presentation at which much of the anger of the Evangelical Church was directed and to which it continued to be opposed.

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1 'Rhetorick - 15th November 1787'. NLS MS.9974,ff.232 and 238.

2 Caledonian Mercury, 23 June 1737. Rollin's method was to read extracts in English and study grammar, following the method by which Latin had traditionally been taught.

3 This topic will be dealt with at greater length in Chapter 5.

> And, therefore, all philosophical Terms of Art, and Words of another Language, or derived from it, that are not by Use become common and familiar, are to be carefully avoided by us.[1]

Earlier in the century, the current belief was that secular learning was held in high regard only by the Episcopal clergy, and that love of religion and love for learning could not be reconciled in any way that was to the benefit of religion. In a pamphlet addressed to the Episcopal clergy in Scotland published in 1711, this belief was stated clearly:

> 'Tis but the ignorant self-conceited Enthusiast that cries down Human Learning in Ministers, and a well ordered Discourse; and that thank God that they have never studied the ordering of their Words and Sentences, and I fear the Sense too, as I have heard some of the present Set of Kirk-Men here confidently assert.[2]

Much later in the century, the same sentiments in different words appear in John Howie of Lochgoin's preface to his Collection of Lectures and Sermons in 1779.

> In many places in Scotland, one may attend many Sermons ... while little else flows from the pulpit than some insipid scraps of morality ... when almost every sentence must either be deduced from or confirmed by some antient or modern Poet, naturalist, or moral Philosopher.[3]

In his 'Treatise on Taste' (an unpublished manuscript in Edinburgh University Library), Robert Wallace considered among other topics the eloquence of the pulpit. Wallace concluded that contemporary sermon-writing in Scotland was

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1 James Dick, The duties of a minister of the Gospel. A sermon, Glasgow, 1732, p.24.

2 The Country-Man's Idea of a Gospel-minister, Edinburgh, 1711, p.18.

3 A Collection of Lectures and Sermons. With a preface by John Howie of Lochgoin, Glasgow, 1779, p.vii. In a footnote, Howie defines the Philosophers etc. as Plato, Epictetus, Socrates, Seneca, Bolingbroke, Shaftesbury, Pope, Shakespeare, Hume and Voltaire.

deficient in good taste and he offered guide-lines for raising its quality and hence its reputation. Wallace considered that the principal aim of the pulpit orator was to persuade his audience, and he considered that religion had natural advantages in prosecuting that aim:

> [It] furnishes in itself topics of persuasion, of all others the most powerfull and the most sublime, the excellency and the dignity of virtue, the magnificence and the beauty of the universe, the order and the regularity of nature, the goodness & the government of God ... and the assurance of a future state.[1]

Wallace laid careful emphasis on the need for the orator to foster qualities of elegance and taste both in rhetorical composition and in the method of presenting speeches and sermons. The orator should address himself to those members of society whose tastes and sensibilities were refined since 'the few and the select, now the many or the undistinguished, are the judges ...' of successful oratory.[2] Wallace concerned himself with the details of dress and gesture of the orator, stressing the need for ease, elegance and dignity, and offering a caveat against what was offensive to good taste.

> Every thing, stiff, awkward, ridiculous, or disagreeable in gesture, ought carefully to be shunned. The Chin must not be prest into the Brest: the head must not hang clownishly forward, or be effeminately reclined towards either shoulder, but he held in a natural and upright position.[3]

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1 Robert Wallace, 'Treatise on Taste'. EUL MS. Dc.1.55, f.614. Cf. Hugh Blair's view that pulpit oratory suffered from over-familiarity and that it required novelty to command attention. Hugh Blair, Lectures, ii,102.

2 Robert Wallace, 'Treatise of Taste'. EUL MS. Dc.1.55, f.538.

3 Ibid., f.540.

While Wallace applied to pulpit oratory the criteria of good taste that were common to all rhetorical composition, he was eminently realistic in his treatment of other central issues. Although he considered moral virtue to be desirable in the orator, he made it clear that in practice it was not always possible to achieve this high standard.

> Reputation is a point important to every speaker, and Quintilian affirms, that a good man only can be an orator. His observation, indeed, is contradicted by experience; at the same time it is certain, that eloquence cannot rise to the utmost sublimity, of which the art is susceptible, with a loftiness of spirit & a grandeur of soul.[1]

Wallace's attitudes are considerably more flexible than those of most of his contemporaries who, like Blair, stressed that only the good man could be a good orator. In regard to pulpit oratory, Wallace's views on many topics were those of his contemporaries: he emphasized the need for unity in sermon design; he recommended that a sermon should be adapted to the needs of its audience; he guarded against over-elaboration and 'metaphysical subtilities, abstruse speculations and critical niceties'; and he stressed the need for simplicity of language and style. What was significant was the precise language in which Wallace defined the aims of the sermon-writer and the practical language in which his views were contained. Perhaps the best example of his precise use of language is his definition of the virtues that the preacher should suggest to his audience.

> On the poor he will chiefly inculcate industry, honesty, and contentment: from the rich he will endeavour to banish those hard hearts, which are

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1 EUL MS.Dc.1.55, f.563. Cf. Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, ii,106.

> often found in men whom vast estates render independent on [sic] fortune, and he will excite the upper part of the world to exercise humility, humanity, and generosity toward their inferiors.[1]

By comparison with Wallace's use of language, Blair's recommendations appear vague and imprecise:

> ...never let the capital principle ... be forgotten, to keep close in view, the great end for which a Preacher mounts the pulpit; even to infuse good dispositions into his hearers, to persuade them to serve God, and to become better men.[2]

Wallace's aim was to promote religious principles but, at the same time, he was concerned to leaven them with a realistic approach. He presented fundamental religious and moral recommendations, but he blended them with a practical understanding of how mankind reacted and behaved, and he commended that approach to sermon-writers:

> A judicious instructor therefore will not deliver a wild and visionary system, which will and must be abandoned in the world, or pretend that riches & grandeur are in themselves perfectly indifferent; but will be contented to prove that external advantages are much less important to happiness than is commonly imagined.[3]

At the same time, Wallace considered the primary function of oratory to be to reform men and to persuade them that the moral life in which concepts of good taste, sublimity and benevolence played interconnecting rôles was the best and correct way to conduct life. The orator who successfully pursued this aim fulfilled a function useful to society.

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1 EUL MS. Dc.1.55,f.608.

2 Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, ii,125.

3 EUL MS. Dc.1.55, f.609.

> The happiness of mankind depends chiefly on the purity of their minds & the rectitude of their conduct, and those are shallow & bungling politicians who imagine the morals of a people little important to their felicity.[1]

In the second half of the 18th century, taste was to become regarded as an essential component of civilized behaviour. However, the imprecise definitions of taste and sensibility provided by writers on the subject of taste led to a lack of restraint in the use of language to define the concept of taste. Alexander Gerard described the rôle of sensibility in artistic composition in this way:

> ... enraptured by every striking form, it fills the soul with high enthusiasm, it sets the fancy on fire, it pushes it forward with impetuosity, renders all its conceptions glowing, and bestows a freedom and becoming negligence on its productions.[2]

The belief that 'taste' could have a moral and purifying influence on society made it easy to reconcile 'taste' with fulfilling the correct function of the sermon-writer: to reform mankind.

At around the same time as Blair was launching his Edinburgh lectures, James Beattie was beginning to lecture on Moral Philosophy and Logic at Aberdeen, where he succeeded Gerard in 1760. Beattie commented on his own lack of early training in rhetorical composition in a letter, dated 22 August 1778, to Mrs Montague:

> ... all the while I was at school and college, I never received one single advice on the subject of composition, except in the matter of syntax alone ...[3]

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1 EUL MS. Dc.1.55, f.614.

2 Alexander Gerard, Essay on Genius, London, 1774, p.406.

3 MS.B.136. Beattie Collection, King's College Library, Aberdeen.

The most comprehensive surviving record of Beattie's lectures is contained in the manuscript Journal of Sessions in Aberdeen University Library.[1] The Journal was begun in 1762 and was continued until 1793, and it contains an account of the work of Beattie's classes during that period. An examination of the content of Beattie's lectures (which he revised during the period 1760 to 1793) confirms the connexion between criticism and moral judgement: to have good taste one must be a good man. In 1764 and in subsequent years, Beattie gave a lecture on 'reading in Public' as well as lectures on speaking in public. Archibald Arthur, who taught philosophy under Thomas Reid at Glasgow (1744 to 1797) dealt with 'fine writing, the principles of criticism and the "pleasure of imagination"'.[2] Among the subjects of his discourses on literary topics were 'Concerning Dr Hutcheson's Theory on Beauty', 'On Sensibility' and 'Concerning the effects of critical knowledge on the advancement of the fine arts'.[3] Arthur was also a licensed preacher whose sermons attracted a modicum of praise from his contemporaries:

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1 Journal of Sessions. B.16. Beattie Collection, King's College Library, Aberdeen. A set of student's notes from Beattie's lectures is in Glasgow University Library. For a comprehensive list of MSS. of Beattie's published works, see Bernard Fabian and Karen Kloth, 'The manuscript background of James Beattie's "Elements of Moral Science"', The Bibliotheck, 5(1967-70),181-9.

2 Discourses on Theological and Literary Subjects by the late Archibald Arthur, Glasgow, 1803, p.514.

3 On sensibility, Arthur's views coincided with those of Hugh Blair: 'We enter into the joys and sufferings of others; we commiserate with the afflicted, and are disposed to drop the involuntary tear in cases where we can afford no relief. Archibald Arthur, Discourses, p.447.

> not only for good composition, ingenuity of thought, and liberality of sentiment, but for the successful illustration of several passages in the sacred writings ...[1]

A tradition had evolved at Glasgow in the 18th century whereby professors of philosophy gave extra tutorial instruction on subjects that did not fall within the immediate scope of philosophy. Smith lectured on taste, Reid on 'commonsense' and Arthur lectured on elegant composition. His aim was to expound on the general principles of elegant composition, not by minute analysis and example but by dealing in broad outline with matters such as style and language.

By mid century, a number of figures who were in a position to influence the teaching of rhetoric and belles-lettres were combining dual rôles as teachers and preachers. As teachers, these men were equipped to absorb and restate to their students the new conventions of taste and morality, and, as preachers, they had a ready platform from which to disseminate these new ideas to their congregations. The spread of the new philosophy into sermons is commented on in 1759 by William McEwen:

> But let philosophy, let morality beware how they usurp that room which belongs not unto them. Let them shine in their own firmament: but let them not presume to aspire to a higher dignity, than they are originally destined unto.[2]

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1 Archibald Arthur, Discourses, p.503. Richardson records in the Discourses that Arthur always read his sermons (as well as his lectures).

2 William McEwen, The great matter and end of gospel-preaching. A sermon, Aberdeen, 1759, p.13.

In a sermon preached before the Society in Scotland for the Propagating of Christian Knowledge in 1752, John Bonar made a similar statement:

> Is it from inattention ... that every sentence is made to sound with the name of the inspired Socrates, - the divine Plato; while the name of that blessed person, the LORD JESUS CHRIST, is scarce so much as mentioned.[1]

These statements contrast strongly with David Plenderleath's apologia for the compatibility of religion and learning when he preached a sermon before the SSPCK two years later in 1754:

> Such is the friendly harmony and agreement betwixt religion and learning, that they both unite in refining the tempers, in polishing and civilizing the manners of a people; they conspire together to promote the good of society ...[2]

Alexander Gerard was yet another preacher and teacher. He had been licensed in 1748 and became Professor of Philosophy at Marischal College in 1750. He was later appointed to the Chair of Divinity in 1760 and moved to King's College in 1771, when he was appointed to the Chair of Divinity there. Gerard continued to follow the now established tradition of propounding the moral view of pulpit eloquence. In a series of lectures transcribed by a student (and now extant in manuscript), Gerard stated:

> The general end of preaching is the improvement of mankind ...[3]

Gerard's theological lectures while Professor of Divinity

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1 John Bonar, The nature and necessity of a religious education. A sermon, Edinburgh, 1752, p.16.

2 David Plenderleath, Religion a treasure to men, and the strength and glory of a nation, Edinburgh, 1754, p.15.

3 Dr Gerard's Lectures upon Theology delivered 1786-7 and taken down by R.E.S. [i.e. Robert Eden Scott]. Aberdeen University Library MS. K.174,f.178.

were published posthumously by his son Gilbert as The Pastoral Care (London, 1799). A comparison of the text with the manuscript lecture notes taken by Robert Eden Scott shows that Gerard was certainly using the lectures, later published, as his text in the session 1786 to 1787. Gerard's lectures reflected contemporary views in their recommendation of virtue, benevolence, sensibility and taste. In 1756, Gerard had won the Select Society prize for his 'Essay on Taste' which was later published in 1759. His definition of the qualifications for a successful ministry illustrate the trend of Moderate 18th-century thought:

> But the most important qualifications of a clergyman are those of the heart. Sincere desire for goodness, a good heart, with a moderate degree of understanding & parts will enable a minister to do much greater service in the church than higher abilities with a vicious character would.[1]

His statement demonstrates the extent to which qualifications for successful oratory had strayed from considerations of doctrinal purity and fundamental religion. Instead, emphasis was laid on beauty of language, style and novelty: Lord Kames in his Elements of Criticism had spoken of the 'sympathetic emotions' and Gerard clearly regarded the conventions of virtue and goodness as part of a Moderate approach to religion and the civilized life. In The Pastoral Care, Gerard classified the aims of pulpit oratory as belonging to one or other of the following categories: 'to instruct,

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1 Dr Gerard's Lectures upon Theology delivered 1786-7 and taken down by R.E.S. [i.e. Robert Eden Scott]. Aberdeen University Library MS. K.174, f.318.

to convince, to please, to move, or to persuade'.[1] He assembled the classes of sermons that fulfilled these aims into the following groups: instructive sermons, probatory sermons, panegyrics and persuasive sermons. He considered the persuasive sermon to be the most complex since in its aim of persuading men to be good, it had to retain the distinctive criterion of persuasion in addition to combining all the qualities of other genres of sermons.

In his discussion of the persuasive oration in The Pastoral Care, Gerard stressed a factor that is important in explaining the appeal of the Moderate sermon to 18th-century Scottish society: the presenting of the religious content of a sermon as advantageous to the audience.

> Now, to persuade to a certain course, we must excite those affections or principles, which attach men to those ends from which our topics of argument are deduced. Would we, for example, persuade men to holiness from its necessity in order to obtain the heavenly happiness, we must not only prove that it is necessary for this, but also render them desirous of the heavenly happiness.[2]

Gerard drew a distinction between the spurious and empty oratory of the harangue which did not have any clear purpose except the fanning of emotional feelings, and a legitimately emotional appeal to an audience's feelings in order to spur them to positive action. This arose out of Gerard's belief that 'the passions are the great springs of action'.[3] Thus, if a man was to be encouraged to strive after virtue, the

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1 Alexander Gerard, The Pastoral Care, London, 1799, p.241.

2 Ibid., p.292.

3 Ibid., p.243.

advantages of doing so must be presented to him in a manner convincing enough to make it attractive. In this sense, Gerard's rhetorical theory is close to that of contemporary 18th-century literary theory, in that both were concerned to ascribe greater value to having correct attitudes to society. The Moderate pulpit was at the forefront of this movement when it stressed benevolence, charity and sympathy.

Gerard's successor as Professor of Divinity at Marischal College in 1771 was George Campbell. Campbell had studied divinity at Edinburgh under Professor John Gowdie but he had then transferred his studies to Aberdeen and, while there, in 1742, he was instrumental in founding a literary club (of which Alexander Gerard was also a member). In his account of Campbell, George Skene Keith described how John Glennie (another member of the Society) had given him a verbal account of the Society's activities.

> As long as I could attend the club, all the members esteemed Mr. Campbell as the life and soul of the society. And in 1745, when I was in Edinburgh, he favoured me with a summary of several conferences, held in the club, on the subject of pulpit eloquence.[1]

Campbell was later also a founder member of the Philosophical Society of Aberdeen (1758) and he delivered the Society's inaugural lecture on 'The Nature of Eloquence, its various Species and their respective ends' on 8 March 1758.[2] The Philosophical Society gave Campbell a platform

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1 George Campbell, Lectures on Ecclesiastical History. With some account of the life and writings of the author by the Rev. George Skene Keith, Aberdeen, 1815, i, ix.

2 The titles of the lectures delivered to the Philosophical Society by Campbell include: 'The Canons of Verbal Criticism' and 'The Dependence of Eloquence upon Grammar'.

from which to rehearse his lectures on pulpit eloquence, which he later published as part of The Philosophy of Rhetoric in 1776.

On his appointment to the Chair of Divinity at Marischal College in 1771, Campbell reduced the theology course to four years so that a student who attended the minimum period prescribed by the Church would still undergo the full course of lectures on theology. His lectures had the comprehensive aim of attempting to satisfy both the theoretical and the practical needs of the student preacher. In devising his rhetorical theory, Campbell began from the premise that pulpit oratory should include all the parts of other orations. Sermons should be addressed to the four faculties of the mind: reason, imagination, the passions and the will. He attributed the substance of his lectures on pulpit oratory to the discussions that took place at the Philosophical Society of Aberdeen. His lectures on pulpit oratory were first delivered in 1772 and then continued to be given as part of the theology course. They were later published posthumously in 1824 as Lectures on Pulpit Eloquence. Campbell regarded simplicity of language and unity of design as the two principal criteria of the successful sermon:

> And do we not see many such pedants in divinity, who think themselves wonderful scholars, because they have got the knack of uttering, with great volubility, all the favourite phrases, and often unmeaning cant, of a particular sect or faction.[1]

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1 George Campbell, Lectures on Ecclesiastical History, i, lxxiin.

His view of religion was based on his belief in the civilizing force that religion could exercise on society, and he emphasized the connexion between religion and virtue. In a sermon on the influence of religion on society, Campbell expressed this connexion overtly.

> I will venture to pronounce, that if ye make a separation between those two which God and conscience have joined together, and divorce religion from virtue, ye will find ye have deprived the latter of her steadiest friend, her best comforter, her firmest support.[1]

In the post-1750 period, the fact that most of the ideas on the rhetoric of sermons were produced by men like William Leechman, Hugh Blair, George Campbell, John Stevenson and Alexander Gerard, suggests that shifts in the design of the pulpit discourse were closely related to events in 18th-century Scottish universities. Teachers at Scottish universities who were also preachers were in a strong position to influence the character of the Scottish Church. They could wield an influence on doctrine in their supervision of the divinity course and they could also exert an organizational force, since unlike other ministers they were automatically returned year after year to the General Assembly.[1] The universities provided a useful platform for ideas on the progress of society, and the pulpit offered a convenient rostrum from which to air these ideas publicly and to the maximum effect. The broadening of the scope of pulpit rhetoric can be deduced from the shift in the

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1 Jeremy J. Cater, 'The making of Principal Robertson', Scottish Historical Review, 49(1970), 60-84.

definition of the scope of pulpit eloquence. From the earlier more limited definition of the sermon as God's word to man, the 18th-century Moderate sermon became a vehicle for conveying social and moral ideas.

The pulpit in Scotland was well-positioned to fulfil the rôle of catalyst for improving ideas, since adherence to it was still strong and its influence was extensive, at least until the 1770s. William Creech pinpointed the varying fortunes of church attendance between 1760 and 1780.

> In 1763 it was fashionable to go to church, and people were interested in religions. Sunday was strictly observed by all ranks as a day of devotion ... In 1783 attendance in church was greatly neglected ... It was made a day of relaxation.[1]

The pulpit was also the single guaranteed position in society from which a masterly hold on public opinion could be obtained and from which weekly public addresses could regularly be made. The pulpit was thus in a strong position to propagate the doctrines of sentiment and the moral graces of the 18th-century improvers. Moderate rhetorical theory stressed that the purpose of preaching was the improvement of man or, as Hugh Blair expressed it, 'The end of all preaching is to make men good', but 'good' in Moderate terms increasingly involved an emphasis on the demonstrable graces of 18th-century improvement - benevolence, charity and sympathy. Conventions of sympathy and benevolence were already being presented to the reading public in post-1750 literary works;

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1 William Creech, Letters respecting the mode of Living, Arts, Commerce, Literature, Manners, &c. of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, 1793, p.33.

and it is certain that the Moderate pulpit's presentation of religious material in terms that stressed these conventions to an audience that was strongly receptive to them, contributed to popularizing the Moderate sermon. Sermon-writers began to see that in an age of improvement, the pulpit was well placed to assist. In his sermon, Faith, Hope, and Charity, Compared (1761), Thomas Blacklock employed the persuasive technique to advance the qualities of charity and benevolence and to persuade his audience of the advantages of these qualities:

> Is not the pleasure which mingles with that compassion bestowed by every uncorrupted heart on distress, more elegant, more refined, and even more delightful, than all the luxury of sense or ambition?[1]

As the Moderate sermon became a mouthpiece for ideas of improvement, laymen became aware of the sermon's change of emphasis. The author of an article in the Edinburgh Magazine or Literary Miscellany for 1785, indicated his recognition of this change:

> I believe it will not be refused, that our preachers, of late years especially, have in general paid such attention to what they are to deliver from the pulpit, that we have now not a few whose compositions equal even those that are the most respectable pulpit orators of any establishment in Christendom.[2]

The change of emphasis coincided with the introduction from mid-century of what Fénelon termed the 'affecting, persuasive art of eloquence'.[3] A soft rhetoric was introduced into

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1 Thomas Blacklock, Faith, Hope, and Charity, Compared. A sermon preached in Lady Yester's, Edinburgh, April 9.1761. Edinburgh, 1761, p.22.

2 Edinburgh Magazine, or Literary Miscellany, i(1785),230-1.

3 Fénelon, Dialogues concerning Eloquence, Glasgow, 1760, p.61.

historical, literary and philosophical writing which revealed itself in the sentimental handling of literary material. A similar 'softening' process was at work in the definition of the aim of pulpit rhetoric. Instead of being directed to securing man's salvation, pulpit eloquence was to be employed to influence individual thought and action. Blair's definition of true pulpit eloquence as 'the art of placing truth in the most advantageous light for conviction and persuasion'[1] gave the discerning sermon-writer considerable scope to express ideas, and rhetorical success was increasingly assessed in terms of its power to sway opinion or to move the feelings. The extent to which oratorical theory catered for the sentimental climate of the post-1750 period can be seen from the success of the Abbé Maury's Principles of Eloquence. A glance at Maury's description of the eloquence of the pulpit reveals the reason for the popularity of this work in an age which set a high premium on the craft of sentimental writing. Maury used the analogy of a man who had discovered that his friend was about to take a step to his detriment. He listened to his friend's arguments and succeeded in dissuading him from the course he intended to pursue by painting a horrifying picture of the distress that awaited him.

> He thus succeeds in moving him, He now descends to entreaty, and gives an unrestrained vent to his sighs and tears, - the work is done; the heart yields, and

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1 Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, ii,104.

> his friend is fully persuaded...CHRISTIAN ORATORS! behold your model.[1]

The main question that those concerned with literary endeavour and with the Church in the 18th century had to consider was to what extent it was feasible and legitimate for the Church to come to terms with the increasingly secular nature of 18th-century Scottish thought and culture.

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1 Abbé Maury, The Principles of Eloquence, adapted to the Pulpit and the Bar trans. John Neal Lake, London, 1793, p.3.

CHAPTER 3

THEORIES OF PULPIT RHETORIC 1700 TO 1800

THEORIES OF PULPIT RHETORIC 1700 TO 1800

> The preacher who can touch and affect such a heterogeneous mass of hearers, on subjects limited, and long thread-bare in all common hands; who can say any thing new or striking, any thing that rouses the attention, without offending the taste, or wearing out the feelings of his hearers, is a man whom one could not (in his public capacity) honour enough.[1]

Jane Austen's view of the task of the successful pulpit orator in the novel Mansfield Park offers an interesting parallel with Hugh Blair's statement in his lecture on the eloquence of the pulpit,[2] that the most difficult aspect of sermon composition for the preacher was to cast a novel light on common and well-worn religious thoughts and ideas. Blair quoted from Bruyère's Moeurs de Siècle[3] in support of his view that composing sermons required the greatest care and attention:

> No sort of composition whatever is such a trial of skill, as where the merit of it lies wholly in the execution; not in giving any information that is new, not in convincing men of what they did not believe; but in dressing truths which they knew, and of which they were before convinced, in such colours as may most forcibly affect their imagination and heart.[4]

This quotation from Blair's Lectures could be regarded as the basis of the credo of the 18th-century Scottish Moderate sermon-writer. His task was to attempt to present religious ideas in a convincing manner to audiences who

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1 Jane Austen, Mansfield Park ed. John Lucas, Oxford, 1970, p.309.

2 Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, London, 1783, ii, 101-127.

3 M. Bruyère, Les Caracteres, London, 1699.

4 Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, ii, 102.

were becoming increasingly influenced by liberal thought and secular tastes but who were, at the same time, strongly conscious of the need for more refined standards of literary presentation. The Moderate sermon, if it was to act successfully as a vehicle for the communication of ideas, had now to embody the canons of good taste as well as convey a religious message. In common with other literary artifacts, the sermon had to combine literary acceptability with the tenets of good doctrine. How these standards were to be achieved within the framework of the sermon is a complex question which concerned sermon-writers throughout the 18th century, but the isolation of the principal distinguishing characteristics of the Moderate sermon is, however, a relatively simple matter. Above all else, the Moderate sermon drew on the optimistic trends in contemporary philosophical and literary thought. The religious message that was presented was one of optimism and hope. The printed treatises that recommended improvements in contemporary rhetorical practice emphasized positive measures: improvements in the quality of sermon composition and a genuine desire for a higher literary standing for the pulpit discourse.[1] The themes of sermons stressed the social factors that bound men together. Andrew Moir listed the characteristic themes of the Moderate pulpit orator in his satirical pamphlet <u>A Second Letter to the Author of the Ecclesiastic Characteristics</u> (1757):

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1 This was in contrast to the rhetorical bias of Evangelical sermons which stressed a pessimistic view of man's temporal state.

> therefore instead of crying up holiness, religion, and seriousness, according to your maxims, ministers preach up the moral sense, devotion, order, harmony, and piety.[1]

I now wish to examine the printed treatises of sermon rhetoric that influenced the 18th-century Scottish sermon.[2]

PRINTED THEORIES OF SERMON RHETORIC (1700 TO 1800)

Two-thirds of the text of William Enfield's The Preacher's Directory is devoted to topics assembled under the following headings: virtue and vice; the duties of piety; social virtues; and personal virtues.[3] The social virtues listed included: benevolence, compassion, beneficence, civility and public spirit. This catalogue of virtues recommended as subjects suitable for the pulpit reflects the public taste for sermons on these themes. It also confirms the swing in public taste towards seeking from sermons the same conventions of elegance and taste that from the 1760s

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1 [Andrew Moir], A Second Letter to the Author of the Ecclesiastic Characteristics. Wherein, the improvement the Presbytery of Edinburgh, and others have made in the author's maxims, are briefly illustrated, Edinburgh, 1757, p.15.

2 I have restricted my examination to those treatises that were published in 18th-century Scotland or which influenced the Scottish sermon. The rhetoric of the English pulpit is outside the scope of this work except where individual works can be shown to have exercised a direct influence on pulpit rhetoric in Scotland.

3 William Enfield, The Preacher's Directory; or, A Series of Subjects proper for Public Discourses, with texts under each head, London, 1771. William Enfield (1741-97) was tutor in Belles Lettres and Rector of Warrington Academy. The degree of LL.D. was conferred upon him by Edinburgh in 1774 in recognition of his reputation as author and divine. DNB, xvii, 369-70.

had begun substantially to influence criticism of literary form. In his Ecclesiastical Characteristics, John Witherspoon demonstrated Evangelical love for ridiculing the 'easy' nature of Moderate rhetoric when he satirized the effortless methods by which this new form of rhetoric was being propagated:

> Scattering a few phrases in their sermons, as harmony, order, proportion, taste, sense of beauty, balance of the affections, etc. will easily persuade the people that they are learned: and this persuasion is to all intents and purposes the same thing as if it were true. It is one of these deceitful feelings which Mr. H-, in his Essays, has shown to be so beautiful and useful.[1]

In spite of Evangelical criticism, these were the qualities which were to become more and more the criteria of a successful Moderate sermon, designed to satisfy Witherspoon's apt definition of the post-1750 Moderate preacher:

> a most genteel and elegant preacher and poet; and, to my knowledge, a man of a warm and good heart.[2]

I now propose to deal with the printed works on rhetorical theory that were either produced in Scotland in the 18th century or influenced the development of the sermon in Scotland in the 18th century.

1. Robert Dodsley, The Art of Preaching (London, 1735)

Robert Dodsley's treatise The Art of Preaching was first published in London in 1735.[3] A Scottish edition of the work

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1 John Witherspoon, Ecclesiastical Characteristics: or the Arcana of Church policy, being a humble attempt to open up the mystery of moderation, Glasgow, 1754(2nd ed.),p.25.

2 Ibid., p.64.

3 Robert Dodsley, The Art of Preaching in imitation of Horace's Art of Poetry, London, 1735. The BMC lists the 2nd edition as ?1746 . It was reissued in 1820, erroneously attributed to Dr Fordyce, as The Preacher's Manual, containing the art of preaching, in imitation of Horace's Art of Poetry, by Dr Fordyce, Edinburgh, 1820.

was published in Glasgow in 1746. A satire on pulpit rhetoric, it was directed principally at the spiritual lethargy of rationalist Church of England divines. There was, in this period, a healthy tradition of parody of Horace's Ars Poetica,[1] but it is interesting to note a connexion between Robert Dodsley, author of The Art of Preaching, and David Fordyce, Scottish author of Theodorus: a Dialogue concerning the Art of Preaching.[2] While Professor of Moral Philosophy at Aberdeen, Fordyce contributed an article on Moral Philosophy to Dodsley's The Preceptor.[3] It was afterwards separately published as Elements of Moral Philosophy.[4]

The significance of Dodsley's poetical treatise on preaching lies in its stress on the connexion between faith and virtue, and the duty of the preacher to accentuate this bond. The aim of the sermon, in Dodsley's view, was to promote virtue since, as he pointed out, 'God cannot hate a virtuous Man'.[5] He criticized the textual approach of rationalist preaching and its tendency to encourage complexity

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1 See The Art of Cookery (1708); The Art of Life (1739); The Art of Politicks (1729). It is also worth noting Anthony Moore's treatise, An Essay on the Art of Preaching, addressed to the Clergy. I have been unable to trace a copy of this work but it was reviewed in unfavourable terms in the Critical Review in 1758: 'To the author of The Art of Preaching we would warmly recommend another treatise of the same nature (although very differently executed) called, The Art of Poetry, written by one Horace, a gentleman well known to our ancestors, and who has laid down some excellent rules to prevent the Moores of his time from exposing themselves in print'. Critical Review, vii (1758), 330.

2 David Fordyce, Theodorus: a Dialogue concerning the Art of Preaching, London, 1752.

3 Robert Dodsley, The Preceptor, containing a general course of polite education, London, 1748. 2 vol.

4 David Fordyce, Elements of Moral Philosophy, London, 1754.

5 Robert Dodsley, The Art of Preaching, Glasgow, 1746, p.8.

and spinosity of thought, and he stressed the omission from contemporary sermons of preaching's most important aspect: the recommendation of the moral virtues.

> But to subdue the Passions, or direct
> And all Life's moral Duties, they neglect![1]

The forging of a bond between faith and virtue was strategic to Dodsley's theory of pulpit rhetoric. He emphasized the need for a strongly persuasive element in pulpit discourses, and he made a concrete distinction between religious conviction and religious persuasion. This distinction, and particularly the emphasis on persuasion, was to become one of the corner-stones of all later 18th-century Scottish theories of pulpit rhetoric.

Dodsley's Art of Preaching contained three ideas influential in moulding the shape of later theories of Moderate pulpit rhetoric. Firstly, it emphasized the need for originality and a more imaginative approach to the task of sermon composition. Neglect of the sermon's potential for shaping contemporary thought is roundly criticized by Dodsley:

> Young Deacons try your Strength, and strive to find
> A Subject suited to your Turn of Mind;
> Methods and Words are easily your own;
> Or should they fail you steal from Tillotson.[2]

Dodsley condemned the careless imitation of accepted pulpit orators such as Tillotson. In calling for a less derivative and more spontaneous and independent interpretation of the religious message, Dodsley was suggesting not merely that the

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1 Robert Dodsley, The Art of Preaching, Glasgow, 1746, p.4.

2 Ibid.

well-presented sermon could influence public opinion: he was implying that in a civilized society the sermon or public oration occupied an enviable position from which to advance the cause of a more moral and aesthetic view of life. In the post-1750 period, the moral and aesthetic vision of man was to become of the greatest significance in Moderate Scottish pulpit oratory. In his discussion of the eloquence of the pulpit in his Lectures, Hugh Blair asserted:

> The end of all preaching is, to persuade men to become good.[1]

The definition of a good man in post-1750 Scottish society thus frequently fitted John Witherspoon's definition of the Moderate man: 'a man of a warm and good heart'.

The implied connexion between moral goodness and the demonstrable virtues of sympathy and benevolence offers the key to the second main point in Dodsley's treatise. If goodness was to prevail, by what means was it to flourish? Dodsley's answer was also the answer offered by the 18th-century sentimental novelists; in both cases the solution lay in the emotional persuasion of the audience or reader. Dodsley remarked to his preacher audience:

> 'Tis not enough that what you say is true,
> To make us feel it, you must feel it too:
> Show yourself warm'd, and that will warmth impart
> To every Hearer's sympathizing Heart.[2]

In Dodsley's interpretation, effective oratory relied on the orator's personal conviction of the truth of his message.

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1 Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, ii,105.

2 Robert Dodsley, The Art of Preaching, p.6.

In a similar manner, the sentimental novelist stressed the need for the author to demonstrate in his person the conventions of sympathy and benevolence he advanced in his novels.[1] Both emphasized the need for continuity between the theoretical and the practical aspects of moral teaching. One might <u>teach</u> the theory rationally, but Dodsley's comment offers an early hint that in a climate in which increased value was laid on the emotions, more was required to convince an audience than mere rational argument.

The third important aspect of Dodsley's view of pulpit rhetoric lay in his insistence that the material the pulpit orator used should be adapted to the intellectual capacity of his audience.

> It much concerns a Preacher first to learn
> The Genius of his Audience, and their Turn.
> Amongst the Citizens be grave and slow;
> Before the Nobles let fine Periods flow...;[2]

The stress placed by Dodsley on the need to adapt the presentation of religious thought to the requirements of different social levels anticipates the emphasis in post-1750 Moderate sermons on presenting audiences with material appropriate to their intellectual understanding. It points to an increasing preoccupation not simply with sermon content but also with sermon form. A good sermon had to stress the cardinal virtues of moderation, sympathy and

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1 Henry Mackenzie comments of Sterne in a manuscript note: 'I should feel much more delight in Sterne's Works, if I had not been told that his feeling, his modesty, & his disinterestedness, were only described in the Writings of Author, but not at all the attributes of the Man'. NLS MS.645,f.6.

2 Robert Dodsley, <u>The Art of Preaching</u>, p.7.

benevolence; but it also had to present these virtues in a manner that would elicit the emotional response sought by the orator and desired by the audience. The concepts of taste and politeness that had begun to be fashionable were now recognised by preachers of literary aspirations as essential components of the successful sermon. Later in the century, Alexander Gerard reflected on the same theme in his 'Lectures upon Theology' (1786-7):

> Were a minister to attempt to found his moral reflections to people of fashion upon like occasion as to common people, he would be looked upon as an empty pedant, & his instructions would run the risk of being termed impertinent & pragmatical.[1]

The Moderate emphasis on adapting religious presentation to the understanding of audiences will be dealt with at greater length in Chapter 4, but it is important to note the divergence of opinion between the studied approach of Moderate thinking on the question of religious presentation and the way in which the Evangelicals dismissed it as irrelevant. The author of the satirical pamphlet The Fashionable Preacher attacked Moderate pulpit rhetoric in this vein:

> When Christians assemble on solemn occasions, it is not to study the rules of criticism and metaphysical reasoning; it is not to learn the profound mysteries of philosophy ... They assemble to hear the great truths of religion ...[2]

This, however, was not the view of the Moderates. On the contrary, they believed that if they set out to attract the

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1 Dr Alexander Gerard's Lectures upon Theology delivered 1786-7, taken down by R.E.S. [i.e. Robert Eden Scott]. Aberdeen University Library MS. K.174,f.97.

2 The Fashionable Preacher: an Essay, Glasgow, 1773, p.7.

religious sympathies of the polite section of society, their sermons must reflect the qualities most highly prized by the polite. The enthusiasm with which Moderate pulpit orators were observed to court polite interests frequently brought them under attack from more single-minded Evangelicals. In a printed sermon delivered at the ordination of the Rev. James Robertson at Kilmarnock in 1777, James Ramsay made his position clear:

> Preach Christ! such cant; nonsense; enthusiasm. They will leave this trite ungentlemanny, old-fashioned subject to the raving sectaries ... Are they solicitous for their salvation, more how to construct a plow to the best advantage; to lay the scene, work up, and adjust the several parts of a tragedy; to attain a Mastership or Principality in the schools, or a Father benefice in the city.[1]

A distinction was being forged between popular taste and discriminating or refined taste; and between the need for didactic religious and moral instruction for the masses and the need for a refined rhetoric for the polite section of society. The concept of different sermons for different classes of readers is a direct extension of this idea. In Thomas Gordon's Plain Sermons on Practical Subjects (1786), a statement in the preface defined the audience at which the sermons were directed:

> The following Discourses are wholly designed for the middling class of readers; that is, for plain Christians, who think not of elegance or correctness of composition, of deep sentiment or a connected plan, and who are satisfied if they understand and are edified by what they read.[2]

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1 James Ramsay, The Character of the True Minister of Christ delineated, A sermon, Glasgow, 1777, p.46.

2 Thomas Gordon, Plain Sermons on Practical Subjects, Edinburgh, 1786, p.[7].

2. David Fordyce, Theodorus: A Dialogue Concerning the Art of Preaching (London, 1752)

Robert Dodsley's influence on theories of pulpit rhetoric was reinforced by the publication in 1752 of David Fordyce's dialogue on pulpit rhetoric, Theodorus:[1] a Dialogue concerning the Art of Preaching, posthumously edited and published by his brother, James Fordyce.[2] As Professor of Moral Philosophy at Aberdeen, David Fordyce was an early figure in the line of Scottish academic interest in pulpit rhetoric, later distinguished by such names as Hugh Blair and George Campbell.

In Fordyce's treatise, a dialogue is enacted between three protagonists: Philonous, the questor, Agoretes, a student of divinity and exponent of natural religion,[3] and Theodorus, a minister, defined by Agoretes as 'at once the best Model of Preaching, and the noblest Example of Living'.[4]

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1 Theodorus derived from Theodorus of Gadara (fl.33 B.C.), a rhetor who taught Tiberius at Rhodes. He was the chief rival of Apollodorus from whom he differed by allowing more freedom in the arrangement and composition of speeches.

2 James Fordyce (1720-96) became pastor of Monkwell Street Church in London in 1760. He was a friend of Dr Johnson and included an 'Address on the death of Dr. Samuel Johnson' in his Addresses to the Diety (1785). He is believed to have introduced Blair to Johnson.

3 Agoretes quotes the Duke of Buckingham: 'The Works of Nature appear to me the better sort of Sermons: and every Flower contains in it the most edifying Rhetoric, to fill us with Admiration of its omnipotent Creator'. Theodorus, p.11. The Duke of Buckingham referred to is probably George Villiers, 2nd Duke of Buckingham (1628-87). DNB, viii, 337-46.

4 David Fordyce, Theodorus, p.81.

The primary importance of Fordyce's Dialogue lies, firstly, in its definition of the aims of pulpit oratory and, secondly, in the strict emphasis the author lays upon the difficult nature of sermon composition. Fordyce offers this definition of pulpit rhetoric:

> It is an Art that depends more on Taste and Sentiment, than on Reasoning and Rules.[1]

Fordyce's clear statement on the emotional rather than on the intellectual basis of good preaching paved the way for later wide-scale improvization on the emotional element in preaching and the methods by which these emotions could be generated. The emotions to be aroused from the pulpit had to be emotions acceptable to the audience; under the direction of influential works such as Adam Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments (1759), there developed a tendency to stress the soft emotions of sympathy, benevolence and pity rather than the stronger emotions of indignation or anger. The supreme values in the life of a man of feeling were the finer or 'soft' emotions, for -

> A propensity to the tender passions makes a man agreeable and useful in all parts of life.[2]

To accommodate the required emphasis on these finer emotions, a 'soft rhetoric' was developed. 'I want', says Agoretes, 'to feel, warmly to feel, no less than to be cooly ⌐sic¬ convinced of, the transcendent Beauty, and Excellence of Virtue'.[3] The aim of this soft rhetoric was to affect the

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1 David Fordyce, Theodorus, p.105.

2 David Hume, Treatise of Human Nature, London, 1739-40, iii,252-3.

3 David Fordyce, Theodorus, p.69.

reader not by content but by the emotional presentation of the material. It revealed itself in the sentimental handling of literary material and it can be detected in Adam Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments, from which many passages could readily be inserted into the sentimental novel with little consequent disjointedness:

> ... by relating their misfortunes they in some measure renew their grief ... Their tears accordingly flow faster than before ... They take pleasure, however, in all this, and, it is evident, are sensibly relieved by it; because the sweetness of his i.e. the bystander's sympathy more than compensated for the bitterness of that sorrow, which, in order to excite this sympathy, they had thus enlivened and renewed.[1]

The seminal idea responsible for the growth of a soft or 'sentimental' view of sympathy was the recognition in pain of an element of pleasurable sensation. Strongly influenced by the Ossianic concept of 'Joy in Grief', the belief in the existence of pleasure amid distress and pain was frequently stated in contemporary works of the period.[2] Hugh Blair referred to this idea in his sermon on sensibility:

> When the heart is strongly moved by any of the kind affections, even when it pours itself forth in virtuous sorrow, a secret attractive charm mingles with the painful emotion; there is a joy in the midst of grief.[3]

This view was advanced earlier by David Fordyce in his Dialogue. The aim of all preaching was to move the passions, or to induce in the audience emotions either latent or unexpressed; but this aim had to be accomplished by methods

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1 Adam Smith, Theory of Moral Sentiments ed. D.D. Raphael and A.L. MacFie, Oxford, 1976, p.15.

2 Henry Mackenzie, author of The Man of Feeling (1771), referred to a 'Joy in Grief' in a letter to William Carmichael of Maryland in 1781. NLS MS.646, f.2.

3 Hugh Blair, 'On Sensibility' in Sermons, iii, 33.

acceptable to audiences conscious of taste and fine feeling. In the achievement of this aim lay the 'art' of which Fordyce spoke. The misdirected use of these techniques to elicit sympathetic responses led, of course, to the worst excesses of the sentimental novel. It also contributed to the development of a 'sentimental' formula for sermons, in which sympathy instead of being a natural response to human distress, became a reference point for inducing pleasurable sensation through the stock responses of the sympathetic emotions.

In explaining his second important point - the difficult nature of the task of composing sermons - Fordyce used the phrase which was to become one of the stock phrases in the theory of sympathy in the post-1750 period: 'the heart of man'.

> It is an Art of Speaking to the HEART of Man, which of all Pupils is the most intractable, variable, and indocile.[1]

The success of a literary artifact was to be based on the success with which the author 'speaks to the heart', his Insight into the human Mind' and 'his Acquaintance with Life and Manners'.[2]

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1 David Fordyce, Theodorus, p.105.

2 Ibid., p.106. The importance of these phrases in post-1750 criticism can be deduced from their frequent appearance in reviews of literary works. This assessment of William Robertson's works appeared in an article 'A Character of the Rev. Dr William Robertson' in the Scots Magazine (reprinted from the London Magazine) in 1772: 'We ... find, in the literary works of Dr Robertson, an acquaintance with the human heart, and a knowledge of the world, which we look for in vain in other historians'. Scots Magazine, xxxiv(1772),196.

Fordyce's new approach to the art of preaching was based on a two-fold need. Firstly, he promoted the need for strict unity of sermon design; and, secondly, he emphasized the rôle of presentation or audience 'manipulation' in preaching.

In calling for unity of design, Fordyce advocated a complete break with the tradition of textual division and sub-division which, he stated, simply,

> break down a Discourse into a Parcel of separate, independent, and minute Parts, which embarass and enfeeble one another, and destroy the Effect of the Whole.[1]

Instead, Fordyce urged the need for a fluid relationship between content and arrangement. In the same way as the anatomist describing the human body gave a comprehensive description of the whole instead of separating the physical parts and describing them independently,

> In like manner, a Master of the Art of Preaching, will distinguish where Nature has distinguished, and divide where Nature has divided: he will observe the genuine Order and just Coherence of Things, how one Truth tallies with another, what Place every thing ought to have to give it the greatest Force, and how the Whole ought to be ranged and combined, to produce the most powerful Effect. A Discourse, executed in this manner, will not want the Grace of Order: the Transitions will be natural, the Connexions strong; and the Divisions, arising from the Subject, will assist, instead of distracting the Attention of the Hearer, and lead his Mind onward naturally, almost irresistibly to the main Conclusion.[2]

Fordyce's concern with the overall cohesion of the sermon points forward to 18th-century recognition that for pulpit

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1 David Fordyce, Theodorus, p.128.

2 Ibid., pp.129-30.

oratory to be persuasive and 'move the passions', it must observe a correct arrangement and placing of ideas. By the 1770s, when a sermon's success or failure in 'moving the passions' had become an important factor in assessing its merit, preachers began to view the architectonics of sermon design seriously. Blair asserted in his Lectures:

> In all that relates to practice, there is no man who seriously means to persuade another, but addresses himself to his passions more or less; for this plain reason, that passions are the great springs of human action.[1]

The widespread acceptance of this idea within Moderate circles contributed to enhancing the importance of the emotion-evoking aspects of the sermon, or what Hugh Blair was later to term the 'pathetic part' of the discourse.[2] Response to the pathetic began to be identified as proof of aesthetic taste. In his Essay on Taste (1759), Alexander Gerard stated this connexion quite clearly.

> Since, therefore, the pathetic is a quality of so great moment in works of taste, a man, who is destitute of sensibility of heart, must be a very imperfect judge of them.[3]

As a result, practical guide-lines began to be sought along which to monitor the refining of both private and public taste, since a refined taste was an essential qualification for social acceptability.

> As is a Man's internal Character and Taste, such will his Sentiments and Conduct be.[4]

Since this was the critical language in current usage by

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1 Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, ii, 189.

2 Ibid., 189-200.

3 Alexander Gerard, Essay on Taste, London, 1759, p.88.

4 David Fordyce, Theodorus, p.166.

the 1770s, sermons had to be written to attract and justify the epithets 'tasteful' and 'heart-evoking'.[1] 'No species of composition', commented the Critical Review in 1766, 'requires a greater delicacy of taste and judgment, than discourses intended for the pulpit'.[2] Fordyce's insistence that the traditional pattern of the textual subdivision of heads (which readily identified sermons as sermons) should be replaced by a more flexible framework, indicates a desire to erase those characteristics that distinguished sermons from other forms of literary endeavour. Since public taste inclined towards simplicity of design and sentiment, the sermon should be designed to be more like a moral essay and less like a theological exercise.

Secondly, Fordyce called for the development of the subtle and delicate aspects of pulpit oratory. The preacher, as well as addressing himself to the understanding of his audience, must also address himself to their conscience.

> The CONSCIENCE, or that moral Faculty of Perception, by which we distinguish between Virtue and Vice, are conscious of good or bad Order within, and approve or condemn accordingly.[3]

The successful address to conscience, whereby the individual applied the orator's words to his own condition, is what Fordyce termed 'the true Master-Key of sacred Eloquence'.

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1 The importance of these epithets can be inferred from their use in contemporary reviews of sermons. The Critical Review comments of John Hewlett's Sermons on Different Subjects (1787): 'They seem rather designed to affect the heart, and to amend the conduct: to the heart they speak with force and feeling, without forgetting the dignity of the man ...'. Critical Review, lxiii(1787),443.

2 Critical Review, xxi(1776),249.

3 David Fordyce, Theodorus, p.131.

To possess it was to own 'that powerful Art, by which he may alarm, controul, and govern the human Mind'.[1]

Fordyce believed that the successful address of conscience was conducted through the imagination. His use of the term 'imagination' has, however, closer links with the 18th-century concept of fancy than with the definition of imagination offered by Coleridge; its links were with the pictorial representation of imagery rather than with the creative forces of the imagination. Fordyce singled out imagery as one of the principal instruments of persuasion, arguing that if the creative orator was to be deprived of its use,

> we should deprive him of a main Instrument of Persuasion, and hardly leave him any thing to move the Passions, which are however the great and immediate Springs of Action.[2]

Imagery, or in Fordyce's terminology 'the natural and animated Pictures of Good and Evil, Virtue, and Vice, Heaven and Hell', was instrumental in arousing the passions of anger, sympathy, joy and sorrow. In employing this imagery:

> There will be both Necessity and Scope for all the bold, the tender, the sublime, and the pathetic Figures, which have been employed, or recommended,[3] by the greatest Masters of Eloquence.

It is worth noting that Fordyce's Dialogue also introduced the 'tear syndrome' into 18th-century Scottish pulpit rhetoric. When requested by Agoretes to provide an easy

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1 David Fordyce, Theodorus, p.132.

2 Ibid., p.135. Note Fordyce's comment on the passions as the springs of human action with Hugh Blair's identical comment in his Lectures, quoted p.191 supra.

3 David Fordyce, Theodorus, p.137. Cf. Robert Traill's view in 1755: 'We are to view the imagination, chiefly, as an avenue to the heart and to the conscience, and employ it to infuse warmth into the former, and impress conviction upon the latter'. Robert Traill, The Qualifications and Decorum of a Teacher of Christianity Considered, Aberdeen, 1755, p.35.

test for measuring a sermon's merit, Theodorus replied that a tearful audience was the best evidence of a good sermon.

> If the unaffected involuntary Groan, or Sigh, burst from their labouring Breasts, or the silent Tear trickle from the recollected Eye.[1]

Fordyce's comment on the demonstrable effects of rhetoric in tears (or what a contemporary writer referred to ironically as 'the briny flood of humanity'[2]) heralds the recognition of tears as a sign or proof that an orator had fulfilled h. aim. To confirm his point, Fordyce quoted the example of the orator, Austin,[3] who when acclaimed by his audience, expected no success, but 'when he drew Tears, he entertained Hopes of their Reformation'.[4] The recognition that tears represented a satisfactorily overt expression of sympathy led to an uncontrolled reliance on tears as an easy device for demonstrating sensibility. Similarily, absence of tears was sometimes regarded as a visible sign of emotional deficiency. An article in the Scots Magazine on the plight of the unfeeling parent used this language:

> He knows not the luxury of that most precious distillation, a tear, because his feelings are blunted ... 'The homage of a sigh' he cannot give - The rapture of feelings, 'harmonious to his own,' he can neither give nor receive.[5]

In the sentimental novel, the shedding of tears was often in itself a sufficient demonstration of fine feeling and, so,

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1 David Fordyce, Theodorus, pp.139-40.

2 Sentimental Magazine, i(1773),6, quoted J.M.S. Tompkins, The Popular Novel in England 1770-1800, London, 1932, p.96.

3 Probably St Austin, one of the patristic fathers.

4 David Fordyce, Theodorus, p.142.

5 'On Freedom of Thought', Scots Magazine, lxx(1808),194.

tears became a literary device to be switched on and off at will. This device could sometimes affect the orator, too. It is recorded of the Rev. Murdoch Mackenzie (minister of the first charge of Inverness from 1763 to 1764),

> that he was so impressed by his own oratory, that his feelings frequently sought relief in tears.[1]

The connexion between tears and fine feeling was reinforced, of course, by a parallel insistence on sensibility in much of the writing of the period. Since sensibility was regarded as a sign of civilized behaviour, and since tears offered the most convenient way of demonstrating sensibility, they were the most readily available device for demonstrating that a man was civilized. Adam Smith championed the cause of sensibility in the Theory of Moral Sentiments (1759):

> Hardiness is the character most suitable to the circumstances of a savage; sensibility to those of one who lives in a very civilized society.[2]

The ease with which tears could be employed to register appropriate degrees of feeling led to an increasingly mechanical approach to sensibility. When the correct degree of grief appropriate to the situation had been registered, the individual was then free to turn his mind to other matters. This situation also encouraged the deliberate courting of sentimental rhetoric for its pleasurable sensations. Lord Cockburn's sentiments as recorded by Samuel Brown, might equally have been true of many of his contemporaries. When Brown visited the Independent Chapel at the

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1 Inverness Kirk Session Records 1661-1800 ed. Alexander Mitchell, Inverness, 1902, p.140.

2 Adam Smith, Theory of Moral Sentiments, Oxford, 1976, p.209.

Queen's Weigh House in London, he gave this impression of the preacher:

> My wellwisher Thomas Guthrie goes far beyond him in picture and pathos (surprising you into tears you know not how, so that that wag Lord Cockburn goes sometimes of a Sunday morning 'to Guthrie's to get a greet') ....[1]

In his remarks on the qualifications for good pulpit oratory, Fordyce listed factors which were to increase in significance in later 18th-century theories of pulpit rhetoric. Firstly, he restated 18th-century concern with the connexion between personal morality and worldly success.

> The good Man, out of the Abundance of his Heart, will bring forth good Things, but a Wicked Man evil Things.[2]

The ultimately decisive factor was a man's 'Soundness of the Heart, not on the Sagacity of the Head'.[3] This view reaffirmed the increasingly personal complexion of 18th-century moral thought: to produce good, a man must himself be good. For, otherwise, how could he influence others to emulate him?

> How shall one, whose Heart was never warmed with a single Spark of divine Love, impart that vital Flame to others?[4]

Fordyce's second indispensible qualification for the pulpit orator was a knowledge of human nature. In defining preaching as 'the art of spiritual medicine', Fordyce argued that the way for the preacher to perfect human nature was by

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1 Samuel Brown, 'Account of the Flight into England 1852-3'. New College Library MS.TR.U/11,f.7.

2 David Fordyce, Theodorus, pp.158-9.

3 Ibid., p.160.

4 Ibid., p.162.

the use of 'moral painting'. Here, Fordyce was restating Longinus' views on the function of moral painting as outlined by Fénelon in his Dialogues Concerning Eloquence:

> To paint, is not only to describe things; but to represent the circumstances of them, in such a lively sensible manner, that the hearer shall fancy he almost sees them with his eyes ... you see plainly that poetry, I mean, the lively painting of things, if, as it were, the very soul of eloquence.[1]

Fordyce's definition of moral painting is vague but it implies the psychological presentation of the passions and characteristics common to mankind. The preacher had to 'paint the superior Pleasures of Religion, Purity, Friendship, and Humanity; and by confronting these with the inferior Kinds, shew the Meanness, Hollowness, and dire Effects of the last in the most convincing and lively Manner'.[2] The rhetorical device to be employed was that of contrast: a strategic juxtaposing of virtue and vice. The full effects of this contrast were to be provided by the strong imagery of the preacher's descriptions. For this, Fordyce contended,

> appeals to every Man's Experience of his own Conduct, and Observation of that of others.[3]

In stressing the usefulness of character descriptions as aids in the juxtaposition of virtue and vice, Fordyce underlined one of the basic tenets of sentimental theory: that is, that vice dramatically portrayed made virtue more attractive. Fordyce stated this quite explicitly:

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1 Fénelon, Dialogues Concerning Eloquence, Glasgow, 1750, pp.55 and 60-1.

2 David Fordyce, Theodorus, p.184.

3 Ibid., p.206.

> If over against the selfish griping Miser, we set the generous and disinterested Friend of Mankind, if we confront the haughty and double-minded Sinner with the humble and single-hearted Christian, the Lines of each Character will appear much brighter, and be more strongly felt.[1]

The vogue for sentimental drama in early 18th-century England encouraged the development of stock sentimental characters. Colley Cibber's Love's Last Shift (1702), the earliest work in this genre, was followed by the productions of a number of mediocre dramatists who catered to the vogue for drama of sensibility. These plays, which allowed audiences to indulge in sentiment for sentiment's sake, created a stock of easily recognizable characters: the reclaimed prodigal; the guide-philosopher; the wronged husband/wife; the orphan; the seduced innocent; and the faithful servant.[2] These standard and popular characters were available for use by 18th-century essayists, novelists and sermonizers as convenient props to evoke sensation. The sentimental novel's use of sympathetic machinery has many parallels in Moderate sermon usage. Hugh Blair remarked in his sermon 'On the Duties of the Young':

> Graceful in youth is the tear of sympathy, and the heart that melts at the tale of woe ... Accustom yourselves to think of the distresses of human life; of the solitary cottage, the dying parent, and the weeping orphan.[3]

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1 David Fordyce, Theodorus, pp.206-7.

2 Ernest Bernbaum, The Drama of Sensibility: a Sketch of the History of English Sentimental Comedy and Tragedy 1696-1760, Boston, 1915.

3 Hugh Blair, Sermons, i,325-6. This passage also appears in the pamphlet Advice to Youth: containing a Compendium of the duties of Human Life in Youth and Manhood, 1813.

Fordyce argued that the preacher should select the appropriate imagery to elicit sympathetic responses from his audience.[1] Fordyce's credo was to promote a spontaneous rhetoric designed to reform through persuasion. He asserted:

> The grand Secret lies in following Nature in every Part, in the Method and Connexions, the Sentiments and Languages, the Voice, the Action, and the whole external Manner.[2]

3. James Fordyce, The Eloquence of the Pulpit (Aberdeen, 1752)

The encouragement to replace the involved arrangement and stereotyped religious content of contemporary sermons, is expanded upon in James Fordyce's essay on pulpit rhetoric, delivered as an ordination sermon in 1752 and published as an appendix to David Fordyce's Theodorus in the same year.[3] James Fordyce, brother of David Fordyce and friend of Samuel Johnson, was influential in popularizing the sermon as a medium for moral and religious instruction. His Sermons to Young Women (1766), for example, was in its fourteenth edition by the end of the century,[4] and the commercial success of his publications was matched by his oratorical successes

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1 Note the connexion between Fordyce's comment later confirmed by Adam Smith: 'In short, Hearers of every Rank and Character are to be distributed and applied to, according to their respective Genius, Tempers, Passions, and Foibles'. David Fordyce, Theodorus, p.210.

2 David Fordyce, Theodorus, p.219.

3 James Fordyce, The Eloquence of the Pulpit, an ordination sermon, Aberdeen, 1752. The title underwent revision in later editions: A Sermon on the eloquence, and an essay on the action of the pulpit (1755); The eloquence of the pulpit (1815). By 1755, a 4th edition of Fordyce's sermon had been published in Glasgow.

4 Note in this connexion: Fordyce delineated: a satire (in verse) occasioned by his sermons to young women, London, 1765(2nd ed.).

as pastor of Monkwell Street in London. His sermon on the eloquence of the pulpit was based on the text Acts.xviii. 24[1] and it was published with the admission that although 'the subject be somewhat uncommon for a sermon, I hope it will not be altogether unseasonable at present'.[2] The address, despite its slightly Evangelical overtones,[3] bears the stamp of much of the Moderate thought that characterized Fordyce's later oratory in London. His views on the refining of pulpit oratory (whose aim he defined as 'to make men wise and good') are more explicit and practical than those of David Fordyce in Theodorus. He classified the qualifications of pulpit orators into natural talents and acquired talents. The natural talents were: a sound and clear understanding; a warm and lively imagination; a retentive memory; and a natural elocution, or original gift of utterance.[4] The acquired skills were: knowledge of religion; knowledge of the Scriptures[5]; knowledge of men; and a competent knowledge of books.[6] Fordyce selected religious books as the orator's primary reading but added to these, moral works,

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1 Acts.xviii.24: 'And a certain Jew, named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent Man, and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus'.

2 James Fordyce, The Eloquence of the Pulpit, Aberdeen, 1752, p.3.

3 Note his reference to the 'evangelical oratour' who should acquaint himself with the 'constitution of the gospel-covenant' and the Scriptures. Ibid., p.9.

4 Ibid., p.7.

5 Fordyce's recommendation of the Bible is effusive: 'Of imagery more rich, more sublime, more strong, more tender, than is to be found in any other composition, how admired soever, not to speak of all the diversity of rhetorical figures. Oh, my brethren, what a treasure of heavenly eloquence have we here!' Ibid., p.11.

6 James Fordyce, The Eloquence of the Pulpit, p.8.

those that 'display a sublime standard of morals' or 'give the most deep insight into the human heart'.[1] The purpose of learning was to assist in the task of sermon-writing:

> He ought to be much conversant with books of the highest character for fine writing, in order to improve his taste for composition, to give him a compass and purity of language not to be acquired otherwise, and to form him by degrees to that style which shall be found most fit for the pulpit.[2]

The primary concern of Fordyce's sermon was with the improvement of rhetorical style. He argued that although the dictum Poeta nascitur non fit applied to the preacher in the same way as to the poet,[3] a successful style in pulpit oratory had to be cultivated by deliberate and conscious effort. He followed his contemporaries in recommending Greek and Roman orators as models, although he did add to these 'a few modern sermons' (although, unfortunately, he did not identify them) 'composed with spirit and taste', but he cautioned preachers against direct and unrestrained imitation of these models. Fordyce's belief that a writer's style was capable of refinement and development, does much to explain the scramble into letters of clergymen in post-1750 Scotland. A refined taste demonstrated a man's right to claim to be a member of an improving society; and a refined literary style was recognized as a tangible expression of a refined taste. The strict relationship between criticism and aesthetic taste is indicated by Hugh Blair

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1 James Fordyce, The Eloquence of the Pulpit, p.14.

2 Ibid., p.15.

3 'What has been said of poets, may be applyed in this sense to preachers: they must be born such'. Ibid., p.8.

in his Lectures:

> For all the rules of genuine Criticism I have shewn to be ultimately founded on feeling; and Taste and Feeling are necessary to guide us in the application of these rules to every particular instance.[1]

If aesthetic taste was an essential component of civilized behaviour, it was in the interests of any man who wished to be considered civilized to cultivate a refined and delicate taste.[2] But the whole question of what constituted good taste in literary style was vague.[3] This can be deduced from early attempts to define a good style. James Fordyce offered this definition:

> Were I to venture at the general definition of such a style, I would call it in a few words simple, yet great; adorned, yet chaste, animated and strong, at the same time easy, and somewhat diffuse; and, in fine numerous and flowing, without running into the poetical, or swelling into the bombast.[4]

The crux of Fordyce's definition of style was his equation of literary simplicity and 'high-mindedness' with stylistic excellence. The fustian rhetoric of the Erskinite/ Boston school with its 'minute criticisms, trifling conceits,

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1 Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, i,38.

2 Note James Beattie's definition of the qualities necessary to cultivate good taste: 'To be a person of taste, it seems necessary, that one have, first, a lively and correct imagination; secondly, the power of distinct apprehension; thirdly, the capacity for being easily, strongly, and agreeably affected, with sublimity, beauty, harmony, exact imitation, &c.; fourthly, Sympathy, or Sensibility of Heart; and fifthly, Judgement, or Good Sense, which is the principal thing, and may not very improperly be said to comprehend all the rest'. James Beattie, Dissertations Moral and Critical, London, 1783, p.166.

3 Fordyce speaks in equally vague terms when he speaks of the 'spirit' of sermons. Ibid., p.18.

4 James Fordyce, The Eloquence of the Pulpit, p.15.

words without a meaning, divisions without a difference, quaint turns, forced allusions, and other frivolous flourishes of a childish or low fancy,[1] was condemned as debasing the aim and function of the sermon. It was the antithesis of the well-ordered and harmonious ethical sermon.[2]

In his sermon, Fordyce reaffirmed 18th-century concern with the need for the orator to adapt and adjust his material to the intellectual capacity of his audience. Fordyce expressed his views on this matter more explicitly and more forcibly than his predecessors:

> When he is to preach to a popular audience, he will carefully guard against learned inquirys, abstracted reasonings, and great refinements of every kind; well knowing, that nothing can be fit for the hearers, but what is level to the capacity of the hearers; and that, as the gospel was mainly intended to be preached to the poor, it must be as absurd as it would be unfair to entertain these, and such as these, with school-lectures, and philosophical dissertations.[3]

The thesis was a simple one: if an audience was uneducated, sermons must take account of and be adapted to their limited understanding. One of the effects of this line of reasoning was to create a distinction between the refined sermon and the sermon aimed at a popular audience. The refined sentiments of Moderate sermons were aimed at the aesthetic improvement and refinement of their audience. The elevation of

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1 James Fordyce, The Eloquence of the Pulpit, p.19.

2 Fordyce's concern with sermon arrangement appears in his statement: 'It is evident they must be variously blended, proportioned and applyed ... To judge this truly, and execute it naturally, is the whole art of preaching'. Ibid., p.28.

3 James Fordyce, The Eloquence of the Pulpit, p.19.

sympathy and fine feeling to act as criteria of refinement and good taste probably encouraged the demand for sermons that would evoke finer feelings (although it is difficult to be decisive about the causal sequence here). Moderate sermon-writers were prompted to produce sermons in which the conventions of good taste were observed.[1] In addition, it contributed to the belief that ministers and men of letters were colleagues in the struggle towards a more aesthetic vision of life, the aim of which was to claim for the clergy the standard described by John Mitchell in 1780:

> correct in morality, intelligent in conversation, urbane in manners, kindly and conciliatory in spirit.[2]

The Evangelical sermon, on the other hand, was principally aimed at the salvation of its hearers. There was little emphasis on social intellectual or aesthetic improvement in the majority of popular sermons preached in the 18th century. The failure of the Evangelical sermon to concern itself with the changing problems of society is one factor in explaining the loss of interest in the sermon by large sections of society in the last quarter of the 18th century. Industrial expansion diverted people's minds from the concerns of the next world to the duties and difficulties of the present one; and the public which was unmoved by the aesthetic considerations of the Moderate sermon became

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1 This statement endorses Fénelon's comment in his Dialogues: 'Would you confine every body to the plainness of country preachers? such men are useful among the common people; but persons of distinction have more delicate ears; and we must adapt our discourses to their polite taste'. Fénelon, Dialogues concerning Eloquence, Glasgow, 1750, p.6.

2 John Mitchell, 'Memories of Ayrshire about 1780', Miscellany of the Scottish History Society, Edinburgh, 1939, vi, 303.

disillusioned with the Church. 'In 1763, places of worship were punctually attended by people of all ranks, who seemed to be interested about religion ... This attention to the duties of religion was greatly diminished in 1783: Sunday was devoted by many to amusements and idle recreations, and to go to church in a family capacity was reckoned ungenteel.'[1] For the Evangelicals, of course, there remained the solace of eternal verities, such as those expressed by Thomas Napier in a letter to Ann Napier.

> If it were not sometimes I'm enabled to look beyond this vain world and see the hand of God in all that befals us here below I should be quite overwhelmed.[2]

The strengthening of the division between sermons for educated and non-educated audiences contributed to fashioning the separate concepts of the popular sermon and the literary sermon. The former's failure to adapt itself to the new commercial demands of the second half of the 18th century meant that, unlike its literary counterpart, the Evangelical sermon gradually lost touch with the primary interests of society. For as William Peterkin asserted in his Dialogue between Mr Alamode and Mr Freeman (1779):

> There is a fashion in religion and morals as well as in dress; not that they are variable in themselves, but men want to bring them to their taste.[3]

By the 1770s the Moderate clergy had more or less assumed

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1 The New Picture of Edinburgh for 1816, Edinburgh, 1816, pp.228-9.

2 Manuscript letter from Thomas Napier, Glasgow, to Ann Napier, Edinburgh, in an 18th-century religious common-place book. NLS MS.3008,f.69.

3 William Peterkin, The Excuses urged by the Absenters from Public Worship examined. A Dialogue between Mr. Alamode, a young gentleman of Fortune; and Mr Freeman, an aged Country Gentleman, Aberdeen, 1779, p.20.

that the primary need of the popular audience was for moral instruction. In the preface to Thomas Gordon's Plain Sermons on Practical Subjects (1786), James Beattie affirmed that the preacher needed to lower his sights to those of 'the common people, who in most congregations are the majority, and who have the greatest need of instruction'.[1]

Part at least of the emphasis on catering for the sermon tastes of the educated part of society stemmed from the belief that if the Church lost its hold on the rich and literary (often one and the same), its grip on the rest of society would automatically weaken. The Evangelical William Thom, minister of Govan, deplored the corrosive effect of commercial expansion on religious life in his Enquiry published in 1761, and he saw religion's consequent loss of influence as a natural sequel:

> As the rich and great forsake religion, the middle and lower classes of mankind follow them.[2]

At the same time, it was equally hoped that the popularity of religion among the higher classes would recommend it to the rest of society, as Freeman commented in Peterkin's Dialogue:

> Now if the lower ranks of mankind saw their superiors exerting the noblest powers of the soul in honouring God, they would naturally be inspired with the laudable ambition of imitating them, and by frequent instances of imitation, would gradually advance in

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1 Thomas Gordon, Plain Sermons on Practical Subjects, Edinburgh, 1786, i, 6. Thomas Gordon (1722-84) was minister of Speymouth from 1758 to 1784. He contributed to the Weekly Magazine under the pseudonym of 'Urbanus'.

2 William Thom, An Enquiry into the Causes of the Decline of Religion. A sermon, Glasgow, 1761 (2nd ed.), p.14.

> piety and virtue ... Persons in elevated stations, Sir, have it in their power ... to discourage vice, and made virtue flourish around them.[1]

In the Essay on the Action Proper for the Pulpit (printed as an appendix to his sermon on the eloquence of the pulpit), James Fordyce bemoaned the lack of powerful preachers in society, and he made a direct plea for the introduction of literary aids to help shape the 'natural pathetic' sermon.

> Is the PULPIT alone an Enemy to Beauty of Address, Truth of Expression, and Harmony of Sound? Must Art, Nature, and the Graces have nothing to do with SACRED Eloquence? Or are not the Professors of it to borrow all the Assistance those can lend, in order to render it more perfect, and by consequence more efficacious.[2]

Fordyce is the first 18th-century Scottish theorist to stress the importance of delivery in pulpit rhetoric. Using the analogy of Garrick's work in the theatre, he defined delivery (or what he termed 'Action') as one of the fundamental components of persuasive oratory,[3] and the principal method of directing men's interest towards the other two components of persuasive oratory: truth and reason. Fordyce opted for a spontaneous form of delivery, defining as just 'that Action alone ... which is a Genuine Exhibition of Nature, which represents her Feelings and Perceptions, and gives to these a Voice and Body'.[4] Fordyce describes the actor as a man who can only act successfully when he acts

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1 William Peterkin, The Excuses urged by absenters from Public Worship Examined, p.33.

2 James Fordyce, An Essay on the Action for the Pulpit, London, 1753, pp.6-7. The edition was printed by R. and J. Dodsley in the Pall Mall.

3 Ibid., p.18.

4 Ibid., p.19.

from conviction and assumes the characteristics and passions of the character he portrays. Fordyce contended that successful pulpit oratory could benefit by modelling its delivery on dramatic delivery, and he reiterated the theme of the preacher's personal conviction in persuasive oratory. 'Since the recommendation of Virtue in his particular aim', commented Fordyce, 'it is particularly expected of him, that he should love it Himself'.[1] Only by this means would the aims of persuasive oratory be attained.

> Every word that proceeds from such a preacher, will be big with feeling and concern of mind, Every thought will issue from the center of his soul.[2]

As one of the essential aids to persuasive oratory, Fordyce emphasized the need for correct delivery or what he termed 'the Art of Sounds'; in other words, a sermon's mode of delivery should be modulated to accord with the sentiments expressed:

> When ... he would express, or recommend the mild and amiable Feelings of Devotion or Humanity, his Voice will dissolve into the most gentle, flowing, and insinuating Sounds ... When he would describe or promote the Meltings of Repentence, or represent his Grief for the Follies and Misery of Mankind, he will melt into tender, plaintive, mournful Measures.[3]

The crux of Fordyce's rhetorical theory was his belief that the first aim of pulpit oratory should be to influence his audience's emotions and by that means convince them of the truth of his message. The content and delivery of a sermon should be designed to achieve this end; and, in

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1 James Fordyce, An Essay on the Action for the Pulpit, p.22.

2 James Fordyce, The Eloquence of the Pulpit, p.39.

3 James Fordyce, An Essay on the Action for the Pulpit, pp.50-1.

addition, the orator should attempt to develop within himself the necessary equipment to assist in his task. Fordyce defined these aids as 'a consciousness of Superior Worth', 'a superior Modesty' and, principally, sensibility, and he couched his definition in language which assigned pulpit oratory to a position well within the excesses of the sentimental novel.

> Then by cultivating a quick and strong Sensibility to the best Interests of Mankind, you will acquire in a greater Degree a certain flowing Tenderness, or benevolent Meltingness of Nature; which, when supported by real Sense and Spirit, I have always observed to soften and dissolve an Audience, beyond any thing whatever, There is, a Tear, ... yes, a manly Tear, may be shed by Compassion over the Frailties of human Nature and Miseries of Mankind, forced out by a big-swollen Heart: I would never have you ashamed of it. It is the Tear of Virtue.[1] It becomes the Christian Orator well: Jesus wept.

This passage confirms the convention of tears in pulpit oratory, and points ahead to its later significance as an intrinsic component of the refined literary sermon. Tears were symbols of the correctness of a man's sentiments towards humanity, for the man who remained unmoved to tears in the face of human frailty and distress must surely be unfeeling, asocial and, therefore, uncivilized. The most unsatisfactory aspect of literary sensibility was the extension of this idea into feeling for feeling's sake and an equal extravagance in the language used to describe it.

4. Fénelon, Dialogues Concerning Eloquence (Glasgow, 1750)

Fénelon's Dialogues Concerning Eloquence were composed

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1 James Fordyce, An Essay on the Action for the Pulpit, p.84.

probably around 1679[1] and were first published in Amsterdam in 1717, two years after Fénelon's death. The earliest translation of the Dialogues into English was that by William Stevenson, Rector of Morningthorp in Norfolk, published in 1722. Stevenson's translation was reissued by the Foulis brothers in Glasgow in 1750, in the same year as the press also published Fénelon's Advice for a person in distress of mind and his Instructions for the education of daughters.[2] His Letter from the Archbishop of Cambray to the French Academy; concerning rhetoric, poetry and history was published with the 1750 edition of the Dialogues, but it was also separately issued.[3] Andrew Michael Ramsay, popularly known as the 'Chevalier Ramsay', wrote the preface to the 1722 edition which was also reprinted in the later Foulis edition.

The three dialogues in Fénelon's work are conducted through the medium of three protagonists 'A', 'B' and 'C'. 'A' assumed the major rôle in conducting the dialogues (with the assistance of 'C'), and he treats of eloquence from a philosophical point of view. 'B' takes the rôle of a young preacher who is anxious to refine his eloquence. Fénelon's insistence on treating eloquence from the point of view of philosophy was to become a factor of importance in later 18th-century rhetorical theory.

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1 Fénelon's Dialogues on Eloquence ed. W.S. Howell, Princeton, 1951, p.36. This is the most recent edition of the Dialogues. I have quoted from the Foulis edition of Glasgow, 1750, in English translation, for ease of reference.

2 Philip Gaskell, A Bibliography of the Foulis Press, London, 1964, pp.147-8.

3 A Catalogue of Books, being the entire stock, in Quires, of the late Messrs R. & A. Foulis, Glasgow, 1777, p.6.

> We destroy eloquence, if we should separate it from philosophy.[1]

The function of oratory to Fénelon was to instruct and persuade by moving the passions and, thereby, to direct men to a life of virtue.

Fénelon instanced the eloquence of Isocrates as a symbol of false rhetoric, that is, rhetoric that was full of elaboration and conceit, and which was designed simply to provide an audience with the sentiments they wished to hear. By contrast, Fénelon's aim was to engineer a move away from the 17th-century practice of Ramus's system of dialectic and thus to reform oratory by basing it on conviction and persuasion. In proposing these reforms, Fénelon's criticism were directed specifically against the theories of Ramus and Talaeus,[2] whose schemes of oratory rested largely on the exploration of what was unusual in rhetorical expression, and which were characterized by extensive use of a rhetorical machinery of trophes and figures and other symbols of rhetorical ingenuity and inventiveness.

Fénelon's theory of rhetoric rejected the conventional view that rhetorical embellishment advanced the cause of pulpit oratory, and he argued for a new rhetoric founded on conviction and persuasion. In the Dialogues, the protagonist 'A' acts as a mouthpiece for Fénelon's views:

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1 Fénelon, Dialogues Concerning Eloquence, Glasgow, 1750, p.43.

2 Peter Ramus, Scholae in Liberales Artes, Basel, 1569. This edition brought together his three main treatises. Andomarus Talaeus, Institutiones Oratoriae, Paris, 1544.

> If a harangue leaves you cold and languid; and only amuses your mind; instead of enlightening it; if it does not move your heart and passions, however florid and pompous it may be, it is not truly eloquent.[1]

Fénelon confirmed the moral basis of rhetoric when he stated that the orator must himself believe what he preached, a view reiterated in the majority of 18th-century Scottish theories of rhetoric:

> An orator cannot be fit to persuade people, unless he be inflexibly upright: for, without this steddy [sic] virtue, his talents and address would, like a mortal poison, infect and destroy the body-politic.[2]

Fénelon's theory was influenced by the rhetoric of both Demosthenes (which 'moves, warms, and captivates the heart') and Longinus' On the Sublime in Boileau's translation (which 'warms our fancy and exalts our mind'). His aim was a rhetoric which could convey the true simplicity of religious ideas, and he recommended the Bible as the preacher's best and most fertile source of the sublime. He also recommended the spontaneously delivered sermon which allowed a flexibility not permitted with the read sermon. Fénelon's Dialogues contained many of the ideas that are later found in the sermons of the post-1750 period, and it is significant that the work was reissued at the very time at which the new ideas on pulpit rhetoric were beginning to be vigorously advanced.

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1 Fénelon, Dialogues Concerning Eloquence, p.48.

2 Ibid., pp.29-30.

5. Charles Rollin, The Method of Teaching and Studying the Belles Lettres (Edinburgh, 1759)

Charles Rollin first published his treatise De la manière d'enseigner et d'étudier les Belles-Lettres in Paris in 1726-8. It embodied the results of his researches into the subject as Professor of Eloquence at the University of Paris, and was first translated into English in 1734. A Scottish edition appeared in Edinburgh in 1759,[1] (the year when Hugh Blair first gave his lectures on rhetoric), and it was followed by a second Edinburgh edition in 1768.

Rollin's method of teaching and belles-lettres appears to have had a considerable degree of influence in 18th-century Scotland. It was commended by Blair in his Lectures; John Warden described himself as following Rollin's methods when he published his Collection in 1765;[2] and the educationalist, George Chapman, included passages from Rollin in his Treatise on Education (1773) as a means of forming a correct taste for poetry.[3]

The method Rollin employed was to examine the fields of grammar, poetry, rhetoric, history and philosophy and to apply to each of them, in turn, the principles of good taste. As part of the section on rhetoric, Rollin included discussion of the eloquence of the pulpit. In dealing with

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1 Charles Rollin, The Method of Teaching and Studying the Belles Lettres, 4 vol. Edinburgh, 1759(5th ed.).

2 The first mention of Rollin is in Warden's A Collection from the Spectator, Tatler, Guardian, Mr. Pope, Mr. Dryden, from Mr. Rollin's Method of Teaching and Studying the Belles Lettres, and his University History. For the benefit of English schools, Edinburgh, 1737. In the advertisement, Warden commented that his collection included: 'from Mr. ROLLIN's Method of teaching and studying the Belles Lettres, many Passages shewing wherein solid Glory and real Greatness consist, and tending to improve the Understanding, to form Manners, and recommend the Study of Religion' (p.ii).

3 George Chapman, A treatise on education, Edinburgh, 1773, p.195.

pulpit oratory, Rollin proposed a triple function for the pulpit orator: to instruct, to please, and to move the passions. He defined the correct style for an orator as a plain style with no over-elaboration of diction,[1] but he stressed that it was essential for the orator to be responsive and sensitive to the reactions of his audience. For this latter reason, Rollin criticized the committing of sermons to memory, recommending instead the spontaneously delivered sermon, which allowed the orator a certain flexibility to audience response:

> ... which those cannot have, who, by a servile dependence on their memories, learn their sermons by heart, and repeat them as so many lessons.[2]

Rollin defined the aim of preaching in these words:

> For preaching has three ends: That the truth should be known to us, should be heard with pleasure, and move us.[3]

He drew upon the classical foundation of rhetoric in the Latin and Greek authors (such as Quintilian) and on the writings of the patristic fathers (such as St Austin and St Chrystostom), whose interpretation of the motive of rhetoric was 'to make truth more amiable to men, by rendering her more lovely'.[4] Of his contemporaries, he recommended Arnaud's Reflections on the Eloquence of Preachers.

Rollin adhered to the belief that only a good man could be a good orator, and he quoted Quintilian in support of this view:

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1 Charles Rollin, The Method of Teaching and Studying the Belles Lettres, Edinburgh, 1759, ii, 266.

2 Ibid., ii, 266.

3 Ibid., ii, 264.

4 Ibid., ii, 273.

> In the excellent treatise of rhetoric he has left us, he lays it down as a rule in forming a perfect orator, that none but a good man can be so; and consequently he looks upon it as a necessary qualification, that he should not only be able to speak well, but also possess all the moral virtues.[1]

In his theory of rhetoric, Rollin distinguished the following types of eloquence, all of which he believed the orator should possess; firstly, the 'plain and simple' style, consisting of 'perspicuity, simplicity and exactness'; secondly, the 'sublime' style in which the 'most elevated eloquence by noble thoughts, rich expressions and lovely passions' was employed; and, in addition, the 'mixed' type which was a style combining both elements.

Rollin emphasized that learning was a requisite for the Christian orator, and he directed the preacher to draw upon the Bible and the writings of the patristic fathers as sources.

> It is a maxim in Rhetoric, established by all who have written on that art, that the only way to speak well, is to think well, or justly.[2]

Rollin's importance in the theory of pulpit rhetoric lies in his treatment of style. While he condemned the over-elaboration of the 17th-century enthusiastic preachers, Rollin continued to regard eloquence as performing an important function in pulpit oratory. He adopted a position

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1 Charles Rollin, The Method of Teaching and Studying the Belles Lettres, i,28.

2 Charles Rollin, The Method of Teaching and Studying the Belles Lettres, ii,301. Rollin regarded the best rhetorical teachers as Aristotle, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Longinus, Cicero and Quintilian.

of compromise between condemning the empty pomp of elocution and, yet, avoiding a careless style of rhetoric.[1]

> There is a medium between a far-fetched, florid, luminous; and a low, grovelling, careless stile: and it is the medium between these that suits the preacher.[2]

When John Erskine preached the funeral sermon on the death of William Robertson, he paid tribute to the influence of Rollin's and Fénelon's works on rhetoric in improving the quality of Scottish sermons:

> About 1730, a few young ministers and preachers, avoiding a negligent style ... were betrayed, by a blind admiration of Lord Shaftsbury, into the opposite extreme, of pompous, florid, and ill connected harangues. Happily, however, this flimsy taste was soon checked ... by the translation of Fénelon and Rollin's writings, and the just sentiments of eloquence which they inculcated.[3]

As part of the practical application of his method, Rollin provided a list of rhetorical devices (with examples) from the Bible.

1. Simplicity	They crucified him there.
2. Simplicity and Grandeur	In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
3. Beauty	Woe unto them that join house to house.
4. Figures of speech	
a. Repetition	Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city.

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1 See also Fénelon's comment on contemporary preachers: ' He never thinks of any subject till he be obliged to treat of it: and then he shuts himself up in his closet, turns over his concordance, combefix and polyanthea, his collections of sermons; and common-place book of separate sentences and quotations that he has gathered together'. Fénelon, Dialogues, p.47.

2 Charles Rollin, The Method of Teaching and Studying the Belles Lettres, ii,278.

3 John Erskine, 'Appendix to Funeral Sermon on Dr Robertson' in Discourse preached on several occasions, Edinburgh, 1801-4,i,269.

b. Metaphor and Simile	I have always dreaded the anger of God, as waves hanging over my head.
5. Sublimity	God said, Let there be light.

Rollin's emphasis on the sublime foreshadows the significance of the concept of the sublime in Scottish writing of the post-1750 period. The clergy's recognition that the Bible was a virtually inexhaustible treasure-ground of expression helped to encourage the idea of an aesthetic approach to sermon-writing.[1] This was further influenced by the contemporary belief that simplicity of style was productive of the sublime. Both Rollin's and Fénelon's works were important in the history of the 18th-century Scottish sermon because they reinforced the trend towards simpler and more carefully-designed sermons and they provided guide-lines for preachers who wished to follow the new view of pulpit oratory.

6. Jean Claude, An Essay on the Composition of a Sermon (Cambridge, 1778)

Jean Claude (b.1618), a minister of the reformed religion in France, had originally published his Essay for the use of his son who was pastor of the Walloon church at the Hague.[2] Claude's Essay was translated into English in

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1 See, for example, John Erskine's reference to Dugald Buchanan's choice of the best example of sublime expression: 'I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away, and there was found no place for them' (Rev.20.11). John Erskine, Letters chiefly written for those bereaved of children or friends, Edinburgh, 1790, vii.

2 For fuller details about Claude, see: The Life and times of Monsieur Claude the famous minister of Charenton in France, London, 1688, and Thomas Jackson, The Library of Christian Biography, London, 1837, vol.10.

1778 by Robert Robinson, a Baptist minister at Cambridge.[1] Robinson himself paid a visit to Scotland in the autumn of 1780, two years after the publication of his translation, and during the time he spent in Edinburgh was 'highly gratified with the civilities shewn him by some of the literati; more particularly, by Dr. Robertson the historian'.[2] There was some discussion during the visit of the possibility of conferring the degree of Doctor of Divinity upon Robinson, but he declined the compliment.

The Essay was a popular work in translation,[3] but it was also known to members of the Scottish literati, including Hugh Blair, in the original French. S.T. Sturtevant, in his Preacher's Manual, pointed to the influence of the Essay on Blair's sermon-writing.

> Claude's Essay on the Composition of a Sermon was at length introduced into this country; and it is supposed that Dr Blair, of Edinburgh, obtained his high reputation, which spread over both Scotland and England, by adopting the rules of that celebrated Essay. He understood the French language, and derived great advantage from Claude long before an English translation was printed.[4]

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1 Robert Robinson (1735-90), Baptist minister in Cambridge, and author of, among other titles, The Christian Doctrine of Ceremonies. A sermon preached at the Rev. Dr Fordyce's meeting, in Monkwell-Street, London, 1781.

2 George Dyer, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Robert Robinson, London, 1796, p.199.

3 A copy appears in the Catalogue of the valuable Library of the late Henry Mackenzie and his son the late James Mackenzie, 26 April 1870. The Essay is recommended in Letters from a Father to his Son, a Student of Divinity: 'Claude on the composition of a sermon, with Robertson's [i.e. Robinson's] notes'. Letters from a Father to his Son, a Student of Divinity, Edinburgh, 1796, p.102.

4 S.T. Sturtevant, The Preacher's Manual, London, 1834 (2nd ed.), i,3. A copy of what is presumably the earliest edition of this work is in the British Library. The volume is dated 1829 but vol. 1 has an additional title-page dated 1828. Sturtevant's work is an expansion of Claude's ideas with the addition of practical examples.

When Robinson's translation was favourably reviewed by the Monthly Review in August 1779, the introductory sentence of the review confirmed a revival of interest in the sermon:

> The Art of Preaching, from the nature of the objects on which it is employed, and the importance of the ends which it is intended to answer .. merits the attention of the Public.[1]

In the Essay, Claude stressed the persuasive appeal of the sermon, in an attempt to effect a move away from the textual approach to preaching to a style more 'sentimentally elegant'. He defined the principal end of preaching as the sanctifying or purifying of the conscience. To achieve this aim, the sermon had to fulfil a dual rôle, firstly, of informing the understanding and, secondly, of affecting the heart. Claude stressed the need for a correct balance between rational conviction and emotional persuasion.

> The pulpit is the seat of good natural sense; and the good sense of good men.[2]

He condemned obscurity and complexity in sermon form, arguing that uneducated audiences required sermons to be clear and simple in order to understand them, and that the educated, too, preferred clear sermons to obscure ones:

> The minds of men, whether learned or ignorant, generally avoid pain; and the learned, have fatigue enough in the study, without increasing it at church.[3]

The correct style for a preacher was simple and grave. In Claude's definition, 'simple' meant avoiding metaphysical speculations and 'grave' involved deleting vulgar or

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1 Monthly Review, lxi(1779),100.

2 Jean Claude, Essay on the Composition of a Sermon ed. Robert Robinson, Cambridge, 1778, p.21.

3 Ibid., p.11.

proverbial sayings. In addition, Claude recommended that the doctrinal content of a sermon should be kept to an appropriate and acceptable level:

> A sermon should instruct, please and affect.[1]

A series of four 'skeletons' or outlines of sermons were annexed to the Essay. These outlines provided practical guide-lines on how to construct sermons, and they were re-printed in Robinson's translation of 1778, and later further expanded into a series of one hundred skeletons in Charles Simeon's edition of the Essay in 1844.[2] The practical advantage of the sermon 'skeleton' was that it included all the components of the sermon, but it left the task of expanding the sermon into its final form to the author.[3]

Claude's call for simplicity and brevity, and his belief that the sermon should avoid unbalance either of doctrine, language or style, was a most acceptable belief to the literati, who were attempting to combine the presentation of religion with the refined and elegant style of discourse that was fashionable. Claude recommended that the sermon-writer should avoid grammatical complexities, quotations from the patristic fathers, and that he should include only those philosophical and historical observations that would

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1 Jean Claude, Essay on the Composition of a Sermon, p.26.

2 Claude's Essay on the Composition of a Sermon; with notes and illustrations, and one hundred skeletons of sermons by the Rev. Charles Simeon, London, 1844.

3 William Beveridge, Bishop of St Asaph, had published a series of skeletons in his Thesaurus Theologicus: or, A complete system of divinity, London, 1710-11. 4 vol.

'heighten pathos and beauty of text'.[1] The emphasis on simplicity in 18th-century writing was linked to the belief that inspiration could function best where human nature was uncomplicated or unharassed by cumbersome and over-elaborate ideas and language forms.[2] There were, therefore, these printed theories of rhetoric available to 18th-century Scottish preachers as well as the theories of university teachers like Blair, Campbell and Gerard. We shall see in the next section how these ideas were adopted by 18th-century Scottish preachers who wrote about the sermon and its rôle and what their views on pulpit rhetoric were.

RHETORICAL THEORY IN 18TH-CENTURY SCOTTISH SERMONS

> There are many who can talk well of the secular affairs of life; such as farming, mercantile affairs, agriculture, and other things of the world ... but ask them anent the plagues of the wicked heart ... all terminates in profound silence; these to them are trite old-fashioned and ungenteel subjects.[3]

In addition to the formal printed works on the theory of pulpit rhetoric which exercised an influence on Scottish 18th-century sermons, a number of printed sermons were also published in Scotland during the 18th century which dealt with the function of the sermon and the minister's rôle as pulpit orator. These sermons reflected the influence of contemporary printed theories of rhetoric on their composition, but they

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1 Jean Claude, Essay on the Composition of a Sermon, p.34.

2 Ernest Tuveson, 'The Importance of Shaftesbury', English Literary History, xx(1952),267-99.

3 A Collection of Lectures and Sermons, with a preface by John Howie of Lochgoin, Glasgow, 1779, p.ix.

also incorporated the views of the ministers who wrote them. As early as 1712, John Anderson defined the need for improvement in rhetorical training, in a sermon preached at the opening of the Synod of Ayr.

> The Art of Speaking is very rarely taught, and it is not every one who is born with it ... By the Art of Speaking, I understand the Faculty of Explaining with Ease, and of Persuading with Energy, This is true Rhetorick.[1]

Despite Anderson's statement in 1712, there is little evidence in printed sermons of this period of any obvious concern about the function of the sermon and the rôle of the preacher. It was not until 1732 when James Dick published his sermon on The Duties of a Minister of the Gospel (1732) and, later, with the publication of William Leechman's sermon on The Temper, Character and Duty of a Minister of the Gospel in 1741,[2] that the trend for printed sermons dealing with the sermon and the rôle of the preacher began to be evident. Leechman's sermon had run into six editions by 1755, and it was followed by a number of sermons on the same subject: John Erskine's The Qualifications Necessary for Teachers of Christianity (1750); John Scotland's The End of Preaching and the Way to Attain it (1780); George Campbell's The Character of a Minister of the Gospel as a Teacher and Pattern (1752); Robert Traill's The Qualifications and

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1 John Anderson, A Sermon preach'd in the Church of Air at the opening of the Synod 1712, Glasgow, 1715, p.46.

2 It is possible that Hutcheson assisted Leechman with the preparation of this sermon. A letter from Hutcheson to William Thom (c.1740), in which Hutcheson described how he had assisted an old friend to write a Synod sermon may refer to this sermon: 'My friend used a great deal of it, in better method and a diction more suited to this country, and made an admirable sermon'. W.R. Scott, Francis Hutcheson, Cambridge, 1900, p.86.

Decorum of a Teacher of Christianity considered (1755); and Andrew Boyd's The Character and Dignity of the Gospel Ministry (1746). I would like to examine those aspects of contemporary 18th-century rhetorical theory that were absorbed into 18th-century Scottish sermons which dealt with the function of the sermon. In doing so, I wish to concentrate on the period 1750 to 1780 which was the period during which improving ideas were most enthusiastically adopted into sermons.

THE RHETORIC OF OPTIMISM

> Of old, it was customary to preach upon controverted and mysterious points of divinity, but it is now hoped that the generality of the Clergy confine the subject of their preaching to what has a tendency to promote virtue and good morals, and to make people peaceable and useful members of society.[1]

The principal distinguishing characteristic of the sermons of Moderate sermon-writers was the apologetic nature of their writings on the function of the sermon. They adopted a defensive attitude in attempting to reconcile the aims of the sermon with the ideas of contemporary secular society. This was most obvious in Moderate treatment of contemporary philosophical thought, which was constantly under attack by the Evangelicals. The traditional attitude of the 18th-century Scottish church was to regard philosophy as inimical to religion. In a sermon preached at the opening of the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr in 1767, James Morrison stated candidly

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1 Thomas Pennant, A Tour in Scotland 1760, Chester, 1771, pp.234-5.

the limits of any association between philosophy and religion.

> Remember, that though Philosophy may polish the mind, yet it can never convert a soul.[1]

Yet in 1752, when George Campbell attempted to justify the relevance of philosophy to the interests of religion, he did so on the grounds that philosophy and religion derived from a common origin and, in addition, that their aims were identical. His defence of this position, however, appears both weak and cumbersome.

> [It is] not as if true philosophy, which is nothing else but the knowledge of the laws of nature, that is the order establish'd in the universe by infinite wisdom, can ever be hurtful to the interests of religion, which claims the same origin and author.[2]

In a satire published in 1764 (the author of which was probably William Thom, minister of Govan) on the subject of the University of Glasgow's proposed move from Blackfriars Church, the author satirized the way in which Moderate sermons relied on presenting philosophical thought in an attractive light.

> The minister ... is often insisting upon the depravity of human nature, and the necessity of revelation: he seems to maintain, that philosophy is not sufficient to render men virtuous and happy.[3]

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1 James Morrison, Gospel-preaching Illustrated and Recommended, Glasgow, 1767, p.40n.

2 George Campbell, The Character of a minister of the gospel as a teacher and pattern, Aberdeen, 1752, p.12.

3 The Motives, which have determined the University of Glasgow to desert the Blackfriar Church, and betake themselves to a Chapel, Glasgow, 1764, p.13. The idea of building a new University Chapel and University Museum was projected in 1764, but was not proceeded with. The University retained seats in Blackfriars Church until 1848, but from 1764 the University service was conducted, under the auspices of the University, in the Common Hall of the Old College.

When John Witherspoon preached before the SSPCK in 1758, he turned his argument around the assumption that the proponents of scepticism and free thought would in time undermine their own case.

> Their latest infidel writers have carried their own scheme to such perfection, or extravagance, that it must discredit the cause in the eye of every sober judge.[1]

The subject of Witherspoon's attack in this statement was Hume's 'writings on morals throughout'. John Erskine, who adopted a 'middle of the road' stance on the function of the sermon, showed a similar ambivalence in his attitude to the effects of contemporary philosophical thought on religion. In a sermon in 1763, cautioning ministers against giving offence, Erskine stated his position:

> Philosophy, though, from the press, it has done religion substantial service; yet, when often introduced in the pulpit, generally hurts it, by usurping the place of what would be more useful.[2]

Frequently, when the term 'philosophy' was employed by critics of the new rhetoric, it was used as a composite term to include the fine arts and literature. The more extreme Evangelical position was to employ the statements of philosophers against their own theories. In his sermon on education preached to the SSPCK in 1752, John Bonar used the elitism of Shaftesbury's moral theory to demonstrate its shortcomings.

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1 John Witherspoon, The absolute necessity of salvation through Christ, Edinburgh, 1758, p. 3 . In addition to Hume, Kames's Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion were also attacked.

2 John Erskine, Discourses preached on several occasions, Edinburgh, 1801-4(2nd ed.),i,57.

> Philosophy, in the refined moral sense of that word, is fitted only for the lofty and free geniuses of the age. So says my Lord Shaftsbury; but the mere vulgar, by which he seems to mean the bulk of mankind, are incapable to comprehend it. A fine foundation this for a general moral scheme![1]

James Oswald took a more pragmatic line in his sermon against scepticism preached before the SSPCK in 1770. In arguing the case for revealed religion, he advocated that scepticism should simply be condemned outright without the generous treatment of having counter-arguments advanced against it.

> Such treatment of sceptics may offend the delicacy of the present age; but the taste of an age is a variable thing; and when good sense has got the better of vulgar prejudices, this will be found the only proper treatment of all disputants who oppose idle cavils to obvious and indubitable truths.[2]

It is remarkable how often the emphasis on improvement appears again and again in post-1750 sermons. In sermon after sermon, the connexion between religion and the attainment of the standards and criteria of a good and civilized society is reiterated. David Plenderleath commented in a sermon on the benefits of religion to men, preached before the SSPCK in 1754:

> Christianity contributes to advance the dignity, and promote the felicity of a kingdom, as this religion is friendly to learning, and to the advancement of human knowledge.[3]

When in the same sermon, Plenderleath criticized Bolingbroke

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1 John Bonar, The nature and necessity of a religious education, Edinburgh, 1752, p.16n.

2 James Oswald, The divine efficacy of the Gospel-dispensation. A sermon preached before the SSPCK on June 8, 1770. Edinburgh, 1770, p.21n.

3 David Plenderleath, Religion a treasure to men, and the strength and glory of a nation, Edinburgh, 1754, p.11.

for advancing the view that religion and free inquiry were incompatible, he was expressing a fear that lay at the root of the 18th-century Scottish Church's anxiety about what attitude it should assume towards secular advance and liberal inquiry. Eighteenth-century Moderate sermon-writers took care to stress their allegiance to learning and to the study of new ideas and, in a climate of improvement in other fields of composition, it is not surprising that the Church considered itself as another area where improvement could and should take place. In the Moderates' interpretation, improvement in sermons meant improving their standard, and secular learning provided a convenient point of contact between religion and literary activity.

> The study of letters is an honour to a country, gives a people a superiority in point of esteem ... The spirit of inquiry, the pursuit of learning and knowledge, gives a nation the preference, in point of delight, to that country where such rational improvements are unknown. A noble source of pleasure arises from these researches to the men of letters themselves.[1]

A liberal education was regarded, therefore, as an essential foundation for preachers. In 1793, Alexander Carlyle preached a sermon on The usefulness and necessity of a liberal education for clergymen, in which he examined the need for clergymen to be educated.

> It follows of course, that he must be conversant in criticism and rhetoric, and every branch of the belles lettres...[2]

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1 David Plenderleath, Religion a treasure to men, and the strength and glory of a nation, Edinburgh, 1754, p.11.

2 Alexander Carlyle, The usefulness and necessity of a liberal education for clergymen, Edinburgh, 1793, p.7.

Plenderleath also supported the forging of a bond between religion and learning and, in doing so, he demonstrated the way in which Moderate clergymen felt they needed to justify religious beliefs on the same grounds as these beliefs were simultaneously being opposed by sceptics and free-thinkers.

> Learning may subsist and be cultivated without christianity: but learning is not discouraged or hurt by christianity ... This religion excites to enquiry, inlightens and improves the reasoning powers; has been the cause of promoting learning, and has put men on the study of history, chronology, and criticism.[1]

To contrast this view of the connexion between religion and learning with the view of the Evangelical wing of the Church brings into focus the sharp division of opinion that existed between these two groups in regard to the function of learning. In 1752, John Bonar, the Evangelical minister of Perth, preached a sermon before the SSPCK on the necessity for a religious education. In the course of the sermon, he contrasted the benefits of virtue with the lesser advantages of a secular education.

> What, my brethren, is not virtue better than science? and an honest man preferable to a learned? For, in reality, without virtue, learning will only serve to feed ostentation, and render the youth more expert in wickedness.[2]

The Moderate view was that improvements in the standard of learning would not only enable a preacher to controvert the arguments of rationalists and free-thinkers, but that it

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1 David Plenderleath, Religion a treasure to men, and the strength and glory of a nation, Edinburgh, 1754, p.15.

2 John Bonar, The nature and necessity of a religious education, Edinburgh, 1752, p.10.

would also enable preachers to detect false sophistry and logic. Gilbert Hamilton, minister of Cramond, published a sermon in 1752 in which he examined the reasons for the contemporary decline in religious observance and advanced suggestions for overcoming these problems. Hamilton isolated as one of the principal reasons for the decay of religion the rise of other fashionable modes of thought or, as he called them, errors of religion. His attack was directed at free-thinkers and sceptics, and since his sermon was originally delivered at the opening of the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale, it is reasonable to suppose that the sentiments he expressed were also those of many of his ministerial colleagues. Hamilton recruited the assistance of learning in the assault on scepticism.

> While learning flourishes, and the arts of reasoning are cultivated, these will be its allies; and fashion and the mode are too capricious and inconstant, to be able to prevail against it.[1]

Another view prevalent among the Moderates was that the opening of man's horizons to learning and to new opinions would diminish religious enthusiasm and thus promote the cause of moderation. Alexander Gerard advanced this theory in a sermon he preached in 1760.

> It is acknowledged that, in other subjects, an acquaintance with the various opinions of learned men, and with the arguments by which each supports his own, tends to secure a man from unreasonable dogmatism.[2]

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1 Gilbert Hamilton, The Disorders of a Church, and their Remedies. A sermon preached at the opening of the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale, May 5, 1752, Edinburgh, 1752, p.9.

2 Alexander Gerard, The Influence of the Pastoral Order, on the Character examined, London, 1762, p.96.

With the Evangelicals, the decline and decay of religion was a constant theme, but few Moderate sermon-writers ever referred to the concept of the decline of religion. The Church was not, however, unaware of the declining fortunes of established religion. In 1753, for example, the Church at its November Commission passed an Act against Profanity and Immorality. Their action was prompted by -

> the declining state of religion within this Church and land, - the visible decay of the spirit of true piety and godliness ...[1]

Both Evangelicals and Moderates were agreed on the importance of education and the need for ministers to be educated. The Evangelicals, however, insisted that the best and, indeed, only justification for education and learning was to bestow correct moral training. The Moderates, on the other hand, regarded education as a means of providing the clergy with a solid foundation in secular learning, which would put them on an intellectual par with contemporaries of equal standing outside the Church. Evangelical opposition was principally directed at the unacceptability of applying literary standards to religion or trying to combine writing and speaking about religion with literary conventions.

The question of education and secular learning was closely bound up with the way in which the 18th-century Scottish clergy were beginning to view themselves and their function. From the 1750s onwards, improving sermon-writers

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1 Nathaniel Morren, Annals of the General Assembly, Edinburgh, 1838-40, ii, 33.

wished to associate themselves with their literary contemporaries. James Fordyce in a sermon preached before the General Assembly in 1760 put this view very succinctly.

> Practice as much as possible the breeding of gentlemen; but never drop the character of clergymen. Between these, when truly understood, there is, I am persuaded, no incompatibility.[1]

There was equal resentment of any infringement of the status and reputation of ministers. When David Hume published his essay on the clerical character in Three Essays Moral and Political (1748), it provoked a hostile reaction from the Scottish clergy. Robert Traill preached a sermon before the Synod of Aberdeen in 1755, in which he condemned Hume's view of the clergy both on the grounds of its inaccuracy and also on account of the undignified view of the clergy that it presented.

> And yet a late author, not satisfied with representing the character of a clergyman, to use his own style, as if it were not the most amiable that is to be met with in human society, hath thought fit to give vent to his spleen, in a still more undignified manner. He tells us plainly, that the character we bear, with the exception of some individuals, is a monstrous medley of crafts and dissimulation, ambition and vanity, arrogance and rancour; and, in general, that all the most odious vices of human nature are infamed by the very genius of the sacerdotal profession. You see, brethren, that, in this instance, the ballance of reason hath not been held, as is most usual with this author, in the equilibrium of scepticism.[2]

Alexander Gerard preached an apologetic sermon to the Synod of Aberdeen in 1760 in reply to Hume's essay 'Of National

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1 James Fordyce, The Folly, Infamy, and Misery of unlawful pleasure. A sermon preached before the General Assembly. May 25, 1700, Edinburgh, 1768(4th ed.), p.49.

2 Robert Traill, The Qualifications and Decorum of a teacher of Christianity considered. A sermon preached before the Synod of Aberdeen, April 8, 1755. Aberdeen, 1755, p.10.

Characters' (Three Essays, Moral and Political, 1748), in which he defended the clergy against Hume's criticisms. Gerard's line of reasoning was that although all professions, including the clergy, were liable to temptation, the aim of the clergy was, nevertheless, to improve men.[1] Hume's view of the clergy seems to have created considerable ill-feeling among the Moderate clergy, more so than among the Evangelicals, who simply dismissed Hume's views out of hand as the views of a sceptic. No doubt, the Moderates saw implicit in Hume's essay a potential danger to their attempts to upgrade the status of the clerical office by combining the interests of religion and society.

Eighteenth-century Scottish sermons dealing with the function of the sermon make a strong connexion between morality and religion. In a sermon on Prayer and Preaching delivered in 1747, David Cooper referred to the vitalizing influence of religion on morality, and he quoted from Addison's Spectator 201 in support of his view:

> One of the most elegant and polite Writers of this, or perhaps any Age, has most justly observed, that a state of Temperance, Sobriety and Justice without Devotion, is a cold, lifeless and insipid Condition of Virtue; and is rather to be stiled Philosophy, than Religion. Devotion opens the mind to great Conceptions, &c. Thus speaks that most celebrated Writer; whose Works are in every one's Hands.[2]

Alexander Gerard, in a sermon on the beneficial influence

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1 Alexander Gerard, The Influence of the Pastoral Order on the Character Examined; with a view, especially, to Mr Hume's representations of the spirit of that office, London, 1762, p.10.

2 David Cooper, Prayer and preaching, the great duties of ministers of the Gospel, Glasgow, 1747, pp.12-13.

between religion and virtue.

> Yet the most natural sentiments of the human heart proclaim, in very intelligible language, that piety is the first and noblest of the virtues, and has a peculiar prerogative above all the rest.[1]

The bond between virtue and religion and the postulating of a natural link between them is referred to again and again in 18th-century writing. Their natural alliance is expressed in this way in a volume of Sentimental Discourses upon Religion and Morality published in London in 1776:

> For religion opens a glorious prospect of a future state; she elevates the mind, informs the judgement, and corrects the impetuosity of our affections ... What union is there between virtue and religion! how natural the ascent from earthly bliss, to that of a glorious eternity.[2]

The Evangelical view of this bond was, however, rather different, While the Evangelicals conceded that morality and virtue were necessary 'handmaidens' of religion, there was a rigid insistence that the primary requirement for religious belief was faith, and they argued that the Moderates by laying so much store by morality were concealing the true nature of religion. John Jamieson, minister of Forfar, preached a sermon in 1795 on the reasons for the advance of infidelity, in which he observed:

> Is it said, that there can be no true religion without morality? It is cordially admitted. But it is no less worthy of attention, that there can be no true religion without faith ...[3]

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1 Alexander Gerard, The Influence of Piety on the Public Good, Edinburgh, 1761, p.3.

2 Sentimental Discourses upon Religion and Morality by a Lady, London, 1776, p.108.

3 John Jamieson, An alarm to Britain; or, an Inquiry, into the causes of the rapid progress of infidelity, in the present age, Perth, 1795, p.65.

The juxtaposition of Moderate and Evangelical viewpoints on the theory of virtue is clearly illustrated in the anecdote told by Islay Burns in The Pastor of Kilsyth, about William Robertson and his colleague Robert Walker.

> The Rev Principal ... One afternoon had advanced the position, that 'So great is the beauty of virtue, that if perfect virtue should appear in a human form, all would fall down and worship her'; and the sounder colleague in the afternoon said, in allusion to this, 'That perfect virtue did appear once, and only once in a human form, - and was crucified'.[1]

While the Evangelicals opposed what they regarded as the uneven balance of Moderate morality, they were also suspicious of the new 'soft rhetoric' of the post-1750 period and its reliance on general themes of morality which they regarded as imprecise and ineffective. In 1713, an Episcopal sermon-writer had laid the opposite charge at the door of Presbyterian preachers when he accused them of following the methodical approach to preaching, whereby they,

> [fly] high upon Unions and Communions, Covenant Relations and Engagements, and if at any time he stoops lower he talks a little of Decrees, effectual Calling, and the Doctrine of Assurance.[2]

By 1774, however, Moderate preachers were coming under fire again from a different quarter, on account of the lack of specificity and precision of the doctrines and beliefs they espoused in their sermons. John Hill, minister of the Associate congregation at Ayr, preached a sermon in 1774 in which he attributed the decline in religious faith solely

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1 Islay Burns, The Pastor of Kilsyth; of, Memorials of the Life and Times of the Rev. W.H. Burns, D.D., London, 1860, p.39.

2 The Causes of the Decay of Presbytery in Scotland. In an answer to a letter from a gentleman of that persuasion, Edinburgh, 1713, p.20.

to the ambiguous ideas perpetrated by the new philosophies of contemporary preachers.

> Subjects of discourse are chosen, from which it is scarcely possible they can profit: the beauty of virtue, the deformity of vice, the harmony of the passions, & are dwelt upon; and what can a promiscuous, an unlearned audience gather from such empty declamations?[1]

Moderate sermon-writers, however, chose their themes for very particular reasons and with great care. They selected themes of benevolence, charity and sympathy because these themes represented the accepted moral conventions among the literati, with whom they were anxious to appear on equal terms. These themes were particularly attractive to Moderate preachers because as well as representing the conventions of 18th-century secular society, they were also themes that came within the ambit of the Christian faith and could, therefore, be justified on religious grounds. Robert Hall, minister of Kelso, published a sermon on the qualifications for the ministry in which he associated benevolence and correct religious conduct:

> To the cultivation of benevolence let me exhort you to give earnest heed ... thus attesting your love for Christ by your generosity towards all mankind.[2]

The Evangelicals objected strongly to the Moderates' use of these general themes and they criticized them for excluding statements on doctrinal faith from their sermons. When George Campbell preached his sermon on the character of a

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1 John Clarkson, Gallio; a sermon preached at Kilwinning, Glasgow, 1774, p.13.

2 Robert Hall, 'The qualifications of a minister stated', The Christian Library, Philadelphia, 1834,ii,549. The Rev. Robert Hall of Kelso went to Aberdeen to study in 1781.

minister in 1752,[1] Henry Davidson, a minister in Galashiels, castigated Campbell for his views:

> How lame and defective is his scheme of the Christian doctrine, not a word of the supreme Dicty of the Son, nothing of original sin, Christ's satisfaction, or of justification by imputed righteousness ... not a syllable of faith ... He further tells us that the end of Christianity is to humanize (a quite new word) the heart ... Christianize would have been a more evangelical word.[2]

Davidson admitted that Campbell's sermon had been favourably received on publication, but he attempted to explain its success away by attributing it to a shift in public taste. Some Evangelicals, however, went even further than Davidson and argued that the 18th-century fragmentation of the Church was directly due to the development of new forms of pulpit rhetoric. In 1766, a pamphlet on the activities of the General Assembly of the previous year made this view explicit.

> I am of opinion, that a real or seeming alteration in the matter, the method, and style of preaching, hath been a more general cause of schism, or secession, than even the exercise of the patronage act.[3]

In 18th-century Moderate sermons on the function of the sermon, the consensus was that its aim was primarily to advocate the moral life of the Christian religion and to persuade men to accept the tenets of religion in a manner befitting gentlemen and members of a civilized society. Religion was to be promoted in terms of rational and candid moderation, for exhibitions of zeal and enthusiasm were

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1 George Campbell, The character of a minister of the minister of the gospel as a teacher and pattern, Aberdeen, 1752.

2 Henry Davidson, Letters to Christian Friends, Edinburgh, Edinburgh, 1811, p.181.

3 A short history of the late General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, shewing the rise and progress of the Schism Overture, Glasgow, 1766, pp.38-9.

associated with the uncivilized and primitive standards of Evangelical religion. In his sermon on The Influence of the Pastoral Order, on the Character examined, Alexander Gerard defended the clergy against the charge that they were antagonistic towards their opponents, and he offered the following apologia for the Moderate creed.

> We can scarce expect to find this vice among either the ministers or the professors of it: for it is indeed the gospel of peace its end is charity, its spirit is moderation, and forbearance, it is wholly designed to root out of the hearts of all men all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil-speaking, malice, and to make them kind, tender-hearted, forgiving, loving and benevolent.[1]

The presentation of feligion in these terms attracted the criticism that a form of morality without religion had been created to provide a 'virtue of the educated'. In a sermon preached before the General Assembly in 1760, James Oswald exposed what he regarded as the superficial nature of the literati's allegiance to religion and their neglect of their religious duties.

> ; for nothing is more common, that to see people of figure, and those who aspire to rank and distinction, affecting a moral character, without the smallest pretensions to religion.[2]

And William MacEwen in his sermon on preaching in 1759 criticized the shallow texture of the 'philosophical haranguer'.

> He talks much about the beauty of virtue, and how conducive is morality to the happiness of mankind, in social and private life.[3]

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1 Alexander Gerard, The Influence of the Pastoral Order on the Character examined, London, 1762, p.89.

2 James Oswald, A sermon preached at the opening of the Church Assembly of the Church of Scotland, May 22, 1766. Edinburgh, 1766, p.29.

3 William McEwen, The great matter and end of gospel-preaching, Aberdeen, 1759, p.4.

The aim of Moderate pulpit rhetoric was to persuade men to emulate virtue by a process of conviction and persuasion, and thus to succeed in controlling and conducting individual action and character. It began from the premise that the religious message itself was fixed and uniform, but that its application should be adjusted and varied in line with the demands and the requirements of the age. As John Scotland expressed it in a sermon on pulpit rhetoric preached in the High Church of Edinburgh in 1780,

> The subjects of preaching are always the same; but the mode of applying them ought to vary with the varying manners of different times and places.[1]

This statement suggests that Moderate preachers had tested the taste of the times and wished to compose their sermons in order to satisfy this taste.

In the same way as religion was to be adapted to the mores of society, the presentation of religious ideas had to be adjusted to the intellectual capacity of the audience. There appears to be a curious ambivalence on this topic in the attitude of Moderate preachers. They believed that religion must be encouraged among the higher classes because of their natural influence on the lower classes of society, but at the same time, they constantly insisted that sermons should be so finely judged that they could be easily absorbed and comprehended by the lowest capacities. Alexander Gerard in his sermon on the influence of piety on the public good, argued that respect for religion was essential for the

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1 John Scotland, The end of preaching, and the way to attain it, Edinburgh, 1780, p.12.

literati on these grounds:

> Should their practice shew that they regard religion with indifference, mankind, always eager to imitate their superiors, will soon endeavour to free themselves from the restraints which religion lays upon their vices.[1]

In William Peterkin's dialogue on religious observance, Freeman confirmed the natural influence that the literary classes exercised in directing the ideas of the rest of society:

> I have the honour to know some families of the most distinguished rank ... who are not ashamed of religion ... and the happy effects of their example are very conspicuous where their influence extends.[2]

John Erskine argued the case for a levelling down of the sermon to the capacity of the audience.[3]

> They should adapt the choice of their subjects to the particular circumstances and necessities of their hearers ... and should compose their sermons so, that the meanest may understand, and the most judicious have no cause to despise them.[4]

And James Dick, preaching on the duties of ministers in 1732, pressed for simplicity in sermon design, contending that,

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1 Alexander Gerard, The Influence of Piety on the Public Good, Edinburgh, 1761, p.21.

2 William Peterkin, The Excuses urged by Absenters from Public Worship Examined. A Dialogue between Mr. Alamode and Mr Freeman, Aberdeen, 1779, p.33.

3 In his sermon on the difficulties of the pastoral office, Erskine emphasized this need: 'Sermons, like arrows shot at a venture, seldom hit the mark, when we know not the character of our hearers'. John Erskine, Discourses preached on several occasions, i,125. See also John Adam's comment: '..e ought also, in preaching the gospel, to accommodate ourselves to the different characters and circumstances of those we speak to ...' John Adam, How a Minister should approve himself unto God, Glasgow, 1765, p.25.

4 John Erskine, Discourses preached on several occasions, i, 33.

> The Bulk of our Hearers are not Scholars, nor bred in metaphysical Learning.[1]

The Evangelicals frequently took the view that a state of comparative ignorance was more desirable than the products of formal education, on the grounds that knowledge was a dubious asset. James Oswald, a protagonist of the 'common-sense' philosophy, condemned the distortion of morality without religion into the virtue of the educated, and he set out instead the advantages that the 'lower orders' enjoyed over educated persons in their freedom from the complications and complexities of learning.

> As to those who hold the middle and lower ranks of life, they have a happiness, and a real happiness it is, to be out of reach of those artificial reasonings and refinements by which the understandings of their superiors are abused and perverted.[2]

A satire on polite preachers published c.1790 confirmed the need for sermons to be adapted to the intellectual level of audiences, but the author stressed that this process should not lead to a lowering of sermon standards:

> I do not mean, that you should debase the truths of the gospel, by delivering them in a dung-hill dialect to your hearers ... You are to speak as unto wise men, who have a right to judge what you say.[3]

Another area for improvement which is frequently mentioned in sermons about the sermon during this period is sermon style.

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1 James Dick, The Duties of a Minister of the Gospel, Glasgow, 1732, p.19.

2 James Oswald, A Sermon preached at the opening of the Church Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1766, p.32.

3 The Babbler, or the fate of the faithful ministers of Christ, Edinburgh, 1790?], p.30.

After 1750, both sermon format and sermon style underwent substantial revision in the hands of Moderate sermon-writers. The older, highly structured and complex format of the sermon, whereby it was divided and subdivided into numerous heads, disappeared from Moderate sermons and was replaced by a simpler arrangement of a number of headings and a conclusion. Teachers of rhetoric like Alexander Gerard criticized the division into heads which continued to remain characteristic of 18th-century Evangelical sermons.

> This custom, unknown to the ancient orators, and to all the Christian preachers of the first ages, was introduced by the scholastics. It often gives only a seeming order to the discourse, but really mangles and breaks it.[1]

The trend towards simplicity in these sermons seems to indicate a desire by preachers, as well as by the theorists, to diminish the characteristics that most clearly distinguished a piece of writing as a sermon, and a wish to fashion the sermon into a form that associated it most readily with the essay form. Together with this, the sermon underwent a process of refinement. In this connexion, it is interesting to examine the process of refining of the sermon by comparing different editions of sermons published in mid-century. If one takes William Leechman's sermon on The temper, character, and duty of a minister of the Gospel, for example, a comparison of the second edition of 1742 with the sixth edition of 1755 shows this process of textual revision at work. The following example shows the refining nature of the

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1 Alexander Gerard, The Pastoral Care ed. Gilbert Gerard, London, 1799, p.266.

changes introduced into the later edition.

> 'Tis from these views of our fellow creatures, that we shall feel our hearts streaming out towards them in such a strong flow of tenderness and good-will ...
> (Glasgow, 1742(2nd ed.),p.18.)
> And if we lay open our souls to the full powers of these interesting views of our fellow-creatures, we shall soon feel our hearts streaming out towards them in such a strong flow of tenderness and benevolence ...
> (Glasgow, 1755(6th ed.),p.24.)

Similarly, in his discussion on style in the sixth edition of the sermon, Leechman appealed for simplicity of style:

> For those who have a just taste and true discernment, know, that a gaudy and florid style, how soft and agreeable soever, can never either touch the heart, or communicate distinct and strong views of divine truths.[1]

The Moderate ideal was a sermon in which the doctrinal content was appropriately toned down to suppress anything that might contravene the conventions of good taste, and where the language employed was simple and sublime. As John Scotland expressed it in his sermon on The End of Preaching and the Way to Attain it in 1780,

> Simplicity is distinguished by that graceful ease, which is the foundation of elegance; and without which, all other beauties become aukward, and lose their names.[2]

Moderate concern with refining the language and the content of sermons provided the Evangelicals with one of their most constant complaints, since they maintained that although

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1 William Leechman, The Temper, Character, and Duty of a Minister of the Gospel, Glasgow, 1755(6th ed.),58.

2 John Scotland, The End of Preaching, and the Way to Attain it, Edinburgh, 1780, pp.38-9.

refinement might be a tool of literary endeavour, it was not, nor could be, the tool of religion.

> Bombast descriptions, glittering flowers of eloquence, and luxuriant flights of wit, had better be left to the heroes of romance.[1]

And in a sermon on the function of the pulpit orator, preached in 1757 by the Rev. James Baine at the ordination of John Witherspoon in the Laigh Church, Paisley, Baine reflected bitterly:

> How rarely in a polite composure will you find these characters mention'd, or marked with precision, whereby the sons of God, may know themselves, from the children of the devil.[2]

In Evangelical sermons on the theory of the sermon, there is an unrelieved insistence on the need for the details and minutiae of doctrinal teaching to be included in sermons, and a parallel contempt for the generalized and unspecific rhetoric of Moderate sermon-writers. To some extent, the Evangelicals' contempt may have been associated with the leeway for doctrinal error that the use of general themes allowed, as well as the dangers of enthusiastic religion that it did nothing to dispel. The latter fear was one that was real to non-Evangelicals, too. John Scotland emphasized the need for a precise use of rhetoric as a protection against enthusiasm, and he commented:

> As all error lies in generals, so generals being more or less obscure, are ever fruitful of error. This holds particularly with respect to enthusiasm, which proceeds always on general views, and to the operations

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1 John Erskine, 'Ministers cautioned against giving Offence' in Discourses preached on several occasions, Edinburgh, 1801-4, i, 58.

2 James Baine, A Sermon preached at the translation of the Rev. Mr. Wotherspoon [sic], from Beith to the Laigh Church of Paisley, June 16.1757, Glasgow, 1757, p.10n. (The imprint reads: M,DCCVII.)

> of which a considerable degree of obscurity is absolutely requisite.[1]

James Fordyce confirmed this view in his sermon on the folly of unlawful pleasure.

> Never rest in general, or vague harangues.[2]

On the other hand, the carping detail and involved language forms favoured by the Evangelicals were out of step with the contemporary fashion among polite preachers for grand themes and lofty ideas. This is demonstrated in a statement in the satire on the move from the Blackfriars Church, when the protagonist comments:

> We have, whatever may be said of us, a <u>real</u>, though a <u>general</u>, and philosophical religion; and had we a chapel, where such of us as have been clergymen are to preach by turns, we will have discourses upon the dignity of human nature, upon disinterested benevolence, upon sympathy and propriety, upon living according to nature, and upon virtue's being a sufficient reward to itself.[3]

One aspect of the sermon upon which 18th-century sermon-writers on the theory of the sermon have comparatively little to say is on the question of language. When, by comparison, the <u>Scots Magazine</u> rejected articles from contributors, the editor felt obliged to offer authors an explanation for the rejection of their material, the most common one being:

> the difficulty of writing STERLING ENGLISH, a language not yet familiar to most of our country men.[4]

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1 John Scotland, <u>The End of Preaching, and the Way to Attain it</u>, Edinburgh, 1780, p.32.

2 James Fordyce, <u>The Folly, Infamy, and Misery of Unlawful Pleasure</u>, Edinburgh, 1768(4th ed.),p.47.

3 <u>The Motives, which have Determined the University of Glasgow to desert the Blackfriar Church, and betake themselves to a chapel</u>, Glasgow, 1764, pp.14-15.

4 <u>Scots Magazine</u>,v(1743),iv.

Yet in sermons written specifically about the sermon and its rôle, there is almost no mention of this topic, although their interest in the subject manifests itself in the alacrity with which ministers studied elocution, and also by the nature of the criticisms made by their opponents in regard to Moderate rhetorical practice. Part of the explanation may lie in the fact that, for the most part, sermon delivery was assigned a relatively low priority by preachers as far as their concept of the 18th-century sermon was concerned. For this reason, a preacher like Hugh Blair, whose delivery was not distinguished, was, nevertheless, regarded as a popular preacher on account of the content of his sermons.

The trend towards the choice of English as a medium for works with any pretension to elegance, and the move away from the use of Scots as a medium for written communication meant, in practical terms, that any writer who expected his work to satisfy the fashionable convention of 'touching the human heart' was likely to write in English. As far as the sermon was concerned, there seems to have been a tendency to continue the use of the vernacular in sermons delivered from the pulpit, but to apply the refining process to the content and style of printed discourses. Delivery was a consideration irrelevant to the written discourse, and one wonders whether the lack of attention to pulpit delivery was deliberate, and calculated to retain a broad and popular base within the audiences for sermons, unlike published sermons which were directed at a more limited and specialized market. William Robertson, Principal of Edinburgh University

and minister of Greyfriars, used Scots both in his own pulpit and at the General Assembly.

> His pronunciation and accents were strongly marked with the peculiarities of his country; nor was this defect compensated by the graces of his delivery.[1]

And Hugh Blair's Scots inflexion offended Samuel Rogers when he heard Blair preach during his visit to Edinburgh.

> Blair's sermon was good, but less impressive than Robertson's; and his broad Scotch accent offended my ears greatly.[2]

John Erskine employed the vernacular in the pulpit; Henry Cockburn in his Memorials recorded that Erskine's 'language (like that of his colleague Principal Robertson) was good honest natural Scotch'.[3] But in his sermon on the qualifications for the preacher, Erskine made a strong plea for more attention to be paid to the rules of elocution in preaching, so that:

> Pronounciation would be studied, an ear would be formed, the voice would be modulated ... The sing-song voice, and the see-saw gestures ... would of course be exploded.[4]

The most specific reference to the desirability of substituting English for the vernacular in the pulpit I have found in sermons about the sermon, is in Alexander Carlyle's sermon on a liberal education for clergymen, in which he supports

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1 Dugald Stewart, Account of the life and writings of William Robertson, London, 1802(2nd ed.), p.194. Stewart's account was largely based on Alexander Carlyle's recollections of Robertson.

2 Recollections of the Table-talk of Samuel Rogers, To which is added Porsoniana ed. Alexander Dyce, London, 1887, p.46.

3 Henry Cockburn, Memorials of his Time, Edinburgh, 1856, pp.54-5. Thomas Somerville referred to Erskine's pronunciation as 'harsh and monotonous'. Somerville, My Own Life and Times 1741-1814, p.62.

4 John Erskine, The qualifications necessary for teachers of Christianity, Glasgow, 1750, p.36n.

the need for preachers to acquire fluency and flexibility in their use of English.

> We in particular, who speak and write a provincial dialect of the national tongue ... had much need to apply with the utmost diligence in early youth to acquire the pure idiom of that language in which we speak and write; because, in more advanced years, it will not only be a more difficult acquisition, but may retain an inaccuracy, or a stiffness at least, which are the marks of imperfection.[1]

As far as the Evangelicals were concerned, the refining of the English language was associated with the current but unwelcome refinement of the sentiments of the sermon.

> for, after our language hath been so much improved by so long, and so free, an intercourse with England, whether it is now possible to turn back to that style and manner of preaching, which was used by our fore-fathers, and which is so popular, and so much desired by the greatest part of the common people, I dare not take upon me to determine.[2]

A satire on the hierarchy of the Church of Scotland published in 1798 refutes the need for study and defines as the principal distinguishing characteristic of the fashionable preacher: the ability to speak English correctly.

> Can the dull plodders, of what is called ancient literature, ever become modern fine preachers? Did the ancients ever write novels or romances; the soul, the immaterial substance, of polite preaching?[3]

But despite the relative silence on these matters in sermons about the sermon, ministers were undoubtedly influenced by the contemporary fashion for refining the language

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1 Alexander Carlyle, The usefulness and necessity of a liberal education for clergymen, Edinburgh, 1793, p.8.

2 A short history of the late General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (1765), Glasgow, 1766, p.39.

3 A Full and Particular Account of the Trial and Condemnation of Mess John Presbytery, Edinburgh, 1798, p.13.

of the polite discourse.[1] By the end of the century, the esteem in which English was held is demonstrated by the inclusion in Hugh Mitchell's work on Scotticisms of examples of inaccurate religious usage.[2] It is difficult to explain the comparative absence of comment on selecting the correct language medium for the sermon in contemporary sermons dealing with its rôle. Perhaps the explanation lies partly in the desire of preachers to maintain popular contact with congregations by using the vernacular; or perhaps the explanation is simply that sermon-writers were, in general, concerned with refining the written rather than the delivered sermon; or, again, perhaps the situation was the one that applied in other areas of literary endeavour, where the literati were happy to use Scots in conversation but most insistent on the use of English for written forms.

THE 18TH-CENTURY CLUB: ITS INFLUENCE ON THE RHETORIC OF THE SERMON

> I wish too you had speaking English clubs, such as they have at Glasgow and here. There is nothing sharpens the wits or improves the elocution more.[3]

To mid 18th-century minds the terms 'club' and 'society'

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1 This topic will be dealt with in greater depth in Chapter 5.

2 Hugh Mitchell, Scotticisms, Vulgar Anglicisms, and Grammatical Improprieties Corrected, Glasgow, 1799, p.82. Mitchell was licensed by the Presbytery of Edinburgh in 1777 and presented to Glasford in 1786, although he demitted the charge in 1796, when he took the view that the union of Church and state was contrary to Scriptural teaching. He then taught in the English and French Academy at Glasgow.

3 Selections from the Family Papers preserved at Caldwell, (1765-1821), Maitland Club, Part ii,vol.ii,330. The quotation is an extract from a letter written by Baron Mure of Caldwell, dated Abbey Hill, 19 February 1776.

were virtually synonymous with the concept of improvement in the moral, cultural and economic sense. As an institution, the club possessed two very relevant advantages to 18th-century improvers: firstly, it permitted its members the freedom to examine theoretical ideas and sharpened their wits by constant debate and rhetorical exchange and, secondly, all its affairs were conducted in English. The popularity of the club stemmed from the recognition that men were bound together in secular society,[1] and that since this was so, collective enterprise was a more constructive method of organizing practical results than relying on the actions of individuals. For this reason, the club became the progressive answer for cultivated and literary men, who wished to examine alternatives and to find solutions to the problems of civilized living within the community. The 18th century saw the rise of a number of specialist clubs in the fields of literature, philosophy and criticism (as well as in areas like medicine), the primary function of which was to allow the unrestricted exchange of informed ideas within the convivial setting of clubs. The club provided an intellectual but, at the same time, a friendly setting in which to debate new ideas.

The Church was well represented at 18th-century literary clubs by the considerable numbers of the clergy, who were members. In addition, there were also the specialist

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1 In his Sketches of the History of Man (1774), Lord Kames defined the outline of the concept of society: 'In the progress of society new appetites and new passions arise; men come to be involved with each other in various connections'. Henry Home, Lord Kames, Sketches of the History of Man, Edinburgh, 1774, i, 133.

theological clubs at which the religious issues of the day were argued. Alexander Carlyle described his attendance at clubs in his Autobiography, and Thomas Somerville in My Own Life and Times confirmed his membership of the Belles Lettres Society. William and George Wishart and Robert Wallace were members of the Rankenian Club (1716-64), founded for 'mutual improvement by liberal conversation and rational inquiry'.[1] The Belles Lettres Society was founded in 1759 as a meeting-place where 'Gentlemen of Taste might communicate their opinions to one another, and receive mutual improvement'.[2] It included among its members William Robertson, Hugh Blair, John Stevenson, David Hume, John Hume and Adam Fergusson; Thomas Somerville confirmed that 'most of the members of the Belles Lettres Society were sons of gentlemen of high rank'.[3] Eloquence was a frequent topic of discussion at meetings of the Belles Lettres Society. On 16 February 1759, James Sholto Douglas proposed the following question for discussion: 'What are the causes of the decline of Eloquence in modern times and what are the proper means to restore it?',[4] and on 6 July 1759, Patrick Cuming (who had petitioned for admittance to the Society but had been rejected on the first occasion) delivered a discourse on the progress of

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1 'Memoirs of Robert Wallace', Scots Magazine, xxxiii(1771), 340-1. The memoir was by Wallace's son, George. Unfortunately, no records of the Society survive if, indeed, they ever existed.

2 Notebook of William Lothian. NLS Adv.MS. 22.3.8,f.6.

3 Thomas Somerville, My Own Life and Times 1741-1814, p.40.

4 Proceedings of the Belles Lettres Society. NLS Adv.MS. 22.3.4,f.6.

eloquence in Greece and Rome.[1] Further discourses on eloquence were delivered on 23 November 1759, 30 November 1759 and 4 January 1760. The range of topics discussed by the Society is indicated by Thomas Somerville's discourse on benevolence[2] and Blair's proposed question on 10 March 1762: 'Who will give the Justest Opinion in performances of Taste a Person who examines them by the rules of Criticism or he who Judges by his feelings?'[3]

George Campbell founded a literary club for students of divinity in Aberdeen in 1742. His co-members of the club were John Glennie (later minister of Maryculter), James McKail (minister of Monwhitter), Alexander Forbes (minister of Fetteresso), Alexander Watt (minister of Alva), James Grant (minister of Knockando), David Brown (minister of Monzie), William Moir (minister of Fyvie), Alexander Gerard, and James Trail, Lord Bishop of Down and Connor.[4] The activities of the club are known from an account of the club given to George Skene Keith by John Glennie, and if Glennie's account is accurate, it is likely that the subject of pulpit eloquence was discussed at some length and in some depth. Glennie wrote:

> In 1745, when I was in Edinburgh, he [i.e. George Campbell] favoured me with a summary of several conferences, held in the club, on the subject of pulpit eloquence; and afterwards, with a copy of an order of preaching, to be observed by a minister,

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1 Proceedings of the Belles Lettres Society. NLS Adv.MS.22.3.4, f.28. When Cuming reapplied for admittance, he commented in his application that he was 'sensible how much the Society was calculated for his Improvement in polite literature' (f.24).

2 Minutes of the Belles Lettres Society 1761-4. NLS Adv.MS. 5.1.6,f4.

3 Ibid., f.10.

4 George Campbell, Lectures on Ecclesiastical History ed. George Skene Keith, Aberdeen, 1815(2nd ed.),i,xiii-x.

> when settled in a parish, and with 'some remarks on occasional discourses'.[1]

The club was eventually dissolved when its members found themselves in country parishes relatively inaccessible to Aberdeen. However, when Campbell later came to deliver his lectures on pulpit eloquence, he admitted that he had derived considerable benefit from his earlier discussions in the Theological Club, and he informed his students that the content of his lectures was largely based on his discussions at the Club.[2] Gerard, too, was influenced in his views of pulpit eloquence by what he heard at the Theological Club.

Along with Robert Traill (minister at Banff), George Campbell was also a founder member of the Philosophical Society of Aberdeen in 1758.[3] Thomas Gordon, Professor of Divinity at Marischal College, John Farquhar, minister at Nigg, and James Trail, Bishop of Down and Connor all became members of the Society. Known as the 'Wise Club' it developed out of the earlier theological club. The rules of the Philosophical Society excluded 'criticism upon style, pronounciation, or composition as foreign to the design of the society', but an examination of the subjects of the papers delivered by Campbell indicates that this rule was not strictly applied in practice.

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1 George Campbell, Lectures on Ecclesiastical History ed. George Skene Keith, Aberdeen, 1815(2nd ed.),i,ix-xn.

2 Ibid., p.lxixn.

3 Minutes of the Philosophical Society in Aberdeen 1758-1771, in the Minute Book 1758-1771. University of Aberdeen MS.539.

8 March 1758	Eloquence, it various species and their respective ends.
September 1758	The relation that Eloquence bears to Logic
January 1763	The dependence of Eloquence upon Grammar
14 March 1769	The canons of Verbal Criticism

Between March 1758 and January 1771, Campbell delivered eighteen discourses (including those listed) on topics connected with eloquence,[1] many of them probably practice runs for his Philosophy of Rhetoric published in 1776. It is likely that the Philosophical Society concerned itself primarily with the philosophy of rhetoric and that it did not concern itself with examining the minutiae of style.

Blair, Carlyle and John Jardine were all members of the Select Society (founded in 1754), of which John Ramsay of Ochtertyre wrote that it had 'a set of the ablest men Scotland ever produced, and it proved, therefore, an excellent school for eloquence'.[2] George Wishart and Hugh Blair were appointed to assess the fields of belles lettres and criticism when the Edinburgh Society for Encouraging Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture set up its committee (1755) to examine fields of enterprise relating to the arts.[3]

As well as the progress established by clergy attending

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1 James Valentine, 'Aberdeen Philosophers One Hundred Years Ago', Macmillans Magazine, viii(1863),pp.436-44.

2 John Ramsay of Ochtertyre, Scotland and Scotsmen, 1888, i,321. William Leechman was a member of the Literary Society of Glasgow at which on 16 November 1764, he delivered a paper on 'Remarks on Mr Hume's Natural History of Religion'.

3 Their co-members of the committee were Hume, William Wilkie, author of The Epigoniad, and Adam Smith.

literary clubs, there were also the specialized theological clubs. A Theological Club was set up in Edinburgh in 1759 and continued until 1764 when it, in common with the Belles Lettres Society and the Select Society, was finally wound up. Members of the Theological Club included Walter Young (minister at Erskine), John Robertson (minister at Kilmarnock), John Martin (minister at Merton) and John Warden (who changed his name to MacFarlan, second minister of the Canongate). A notebook belonging to William Lothian in the National Library of Scotland contains preparatory notes for the Theological Society.[1] Thomas Somerville also gave an account of the Theological Society which he joined in 1759, the year of its foundation. Somerville contended that the 18th-century club fulfilled a dual rôle: firstly, as 'a school of mental improvement' and, secondly, as a 'nursery of brotherly love and kind affections', and he attributed any progress he had made in literature to his attendance at both the Theological Club and the Belles Lettres Society. In the same year as the Theological Society was disbanded, the Speculative Society was founded with the aim of 'improvement in literary composition and Public Speaking'. John Bonar, minister at Cockpen, was a member of the Speculative Society, as well as of the Belles Lettres Society.

A second Theological Society was founded in Edinburgh in 1776 for students of divinity and established ministers

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1 NLS Adv.MS.22.3.8.

of the Church.[1] No records of the Society survive but a printed list of the Society's regulations, extant in New College Library, Edinburgh, gives a clear indication of the aims of the Society.[2] The primary rôle of the Society was to discuss topics of interest to students of divinity. A list of topics for discourses was compiled and a discourse and a lecture (from a collection of passages selected by the Society) was delivered every second evening. In addition, a question on a theological theme selected by the Society was discussed and debated each night. The laws of the Society allowed a sermon to be substituted for the systematic discourse. Members leading debates were not allowed to read their observations 'under the penalty of one shilling, unless permitted by the Society'. Members were also fined for interrupting fellow-speakers or failing to deliver a discourse.

In 1785, the Adelpho-Theological Society was founded in Edinburgh with a stated aim of 'improvement in the composition and delivery of pulpit discourses'. A printed list of the Laws of the Society was printed in 1818,[3] and a reference to the Society's activities appears in the Edinburgh Weekly Journal for 1824.[4] Membership of the Society was restricted to students of divinity. Entry was by petition

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1 Alexander Grant, The History of the University of Edinburgh, ii,485. Bower suggests that some of the most distinguished ministers of the Church of Scotland were members (iii,265).

2 Laws of the Theological Society instituted 1776, Edinburgh, 1818. New College Library MS. MH/4/7.

3 The Laws of the Adelpho-Theological Society instituted in 1785, Edinburgh, 1818. New College Library MS.MH/4/7.

4 Edinburgh Weekly Journal, 18 August 1824, p.261.

and a two-thirds majority assent by ballot was required for the member proposed. The Society met both in winter and in summer; the winter session ran from the third Saturday in November to the first Saturday in April, and the summer session ran from the second Saturday in May until the first Saturday in August. Meetings took place in Lady Glenorchy's Chapel at 11 am. each Saturday. The rules were similar to those pertaining in the earlier Theological Society of 1776. Attendance at meetings of the Society was closely monitored, and erring members were fined anything from 6d to 2.6d for non-attendance. Only indisposition, an official engagement or an absence from town of more than four miles' distance were acceptable reasons for absence from meetings. An equally strict moral guard was kept on members. Fines could be imposed for 'unbecoming language or behaviour' and the Society had the power to censure any member whose behaviour lacked due propriety.

Each meeting of the Society comprised two sermons or lectures provided that twelve ordinary members were present (the number was reduced if fewer than twelve members were present). To ensure original matter, members were not allowed to deliver discourses that had already been delivered in the same session at the Divinity Hall or in the Church History class. After the discourse (which was not to last longer than 25 minutes), members were asked to comment upon it.

Theological societies were not, however, exclusively the prerogative of the Moderates. The Associate Burgher

Synod, for example, established a Theological Society in 1765 (which ran until 1788) at Kinross. An account of the rules of this Society is extant in New College Library.[1] The Society followed very closely the arrangement of its counterpart societies. It was, however, a peripatetic society, following the newly-appointed Professor of the Associate Burgher Synod. The Society went with John Brown to Haddington, and in 1787 it moved to Selkirk with George Lawson.

Thus in the important decade 1750 to 1760, a number of clubs aimed at improvements in the fields of literature and elocution flourished in Edinburgh, indicating a general interest in these topics among the literati. Clergymen took up this interest, too, involving themselves in clubs and concerning themselves with acquiring the requisite qualities of taste and elegance. There were thus available to them three important sources for improving the rhetorical standard of sermons. The printed treatises offered guide-lines to preachers composing their sermons; those Moderate preachers who were interested in refining the sermon embodied their ideas in the sermons they wrote which other preachers could follow if they wished. In addition, clubs provided the clergy with the ideal forum for discussing the new rhetorical ideas. Together with the new training in rhetoric in universities, these developments led to a keen desire on the part

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1 New College Library MS. SR/1/7.

of Moderate sermon-writers to apply improving ideas to the sermon in the same way as they were being applied to other fields of literary endeavour. The successful outcome would be to produce a model of the clergyman as projected by Alexander Carlyle.

> His skill in rhetoric will teach him to form his orations in such a manner, as best to answer the purpose of eloquence, which is persuasion. His being an adept in the science of ethics, his perfect acquaintance with the structure of the human mind, will direct him to point the scope of his discourses, so as to sway the passions of men, the springs of their conduct.[1]

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1 Alexander Carlyle, The Usefulness of a Liberal Education for Clergymen, Edinburgh, 1793, p.26.